

















GRANDMOTHER  
NORMANDY.

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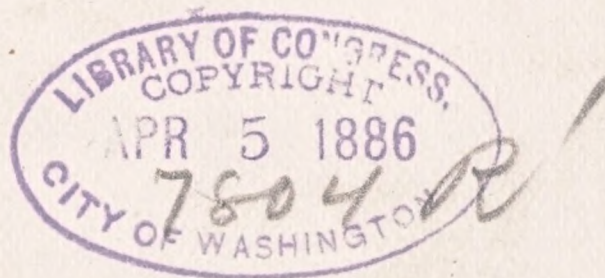




# GRANDMOTHER NORMANDY.

BY THE  
AUTHOR OF "ANDY LUTTRELL."

*Mary Andrews Fenison.*



BOSTON:  
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**GRANDMOTHER NORMANDY.**







## CHAPTER I.

### MY FIRST SORROW.

I INTRODUCE to you my dog, Blossom. He is a thoroughbred,—a great, grand St. Bernard; and what constitutes his pretension to absolute beauty is the fact, that he is white from head to foot,—a downy, silky, glossy, incomparable coat, that shines in the sun with absolute splendor. Given with this, a pair of brown, contemplative eyes,—eyes of such softness and expressiveness as one seldom sees, even in a human countenance; an expression clear and amiable; a quickening of the whole *physique* when any thing pleases him, particularly if I praise him;—and you must see, if you be not unusually dull of comprehension, that my Blossom is no ordinary dog.

Now, I will to my story.

I was fourteen when my mother died. Before that sad event, we lived like princes. I have never seen such an establishment as that my father maintained, even in beautiful Paris, which was the city of my birth.

You see, I was not expected at all. Fifteen years they had waited for me, and quite given me up, when, lo! I made my appearance one beautiful June day, and set the world rejoicing. I mean, of course, the little world in which my parents moved; for in Paris there are circles within circles, and in society worlds innumerable.



I don't know which was the proudest, as I grew up, I of my mother or my mother of me. I think on both sides the love came very near idolatry. No mental method of my own can place my mother before the reader's eye. Pen pictures are always all of a color; and, though they produce the finest lines and the most exquisite shading, they fail in those sweet, almost intangible tints, that give such ecstasy to the painter's eye and heart, and which even his brush sometimes fails to convey.

I can then only say, that she was very, very beautiful!—beautiful with the divine lighting-up of a soul as ineffable in its purity as were her face and form in all their delicate lines and curves.

My father was a large, grave man, rather imposing in face and figure, but handsome only to those who knew and loved him. His portrait is before me now, tall, commanding, and with that love in his eyes which, alas! I came in time to look for without finding:—a royal man in shape, with a kingly will impressed upon his brow; and yet a will that never oppressed those with whom he was in daily contact. Towards my mother he was chivalry itself. If there were two sides to the shield of their wedded happiness, I never saw but one, and that was sunbright, a veritable shield of gold. They loved each other in the highest, holiest, purest sense. He seemed, by an almost divine intuition, to comprehend her wishes, her mental states, and her wants.

Always, both were courteous. I did not need to be taught politeness as a distinctive quality: it was



in the atmosphere about me perpetually ; and I came to learn and understand the claims and needs of others, through the same gracious influence.

It was an unusual experience to me in those days to see an unhappy face. My home was to me like the nest of a young bird, whose mother sits brooding over it from day to day. There is a love that does not properly belong to any place but home. Go where you will, distance does not annihilate it. Friendships may gather in the way, yet they cannot separate the heart's yearnings from the tender love of home. It is surely a type and foretaste of heaven. The world is full of heavenly types and shadows of intrinsic loveliness, which will be only infinitely extended in the immortal life.

I did not dream then, that there were even shadows. I had never known a sorrow. To me, ignorance was indeed bliss.

The first letting-in of the light—or was it the darkness?—came to me when I was twelve years old. Not many children of half that age are as innocent and unworldly, now, as I was then.

I had a little boy companion. Many girls of twelve have, I suppose. Not that I ever called him by any silly name, only that I felt that, next to my father and my mother, Rupert Waldemain was the dearest friend I had.

He was a handsome boy, with eyes like stars and a smile that could be compared to nothing but the light, so instantaneously would it flash all over his face. His parents, poor and noble, lived in the apartments two



flights above ours. They were prim, precise people, looking much older than they really were, and pinching themselves of accustomed luxuries for Rupert's sake. The lad was to them as a sunbeam or a flower, so precious that he was never trusted out of their sight, save when he came down to play with me. In his little quaint suit of blue velvet, trimmed with expensive old lace and fastened with gold studs, my little gentleman always looked his loveliest on these occasions.

"What makes your mother so beautiful?" he asked one day, when tired of playing hippodrome with only the chairs and cushions for tigers and elephants. We were resting in the huge bay-window of my nursery. "I mean," he added, "what makes her look so young, with the red in her cheeks?"

"Because she is young and beautiful," I answered, proudly. "Was your mamma ever beautiful?"

"Oh, yes; there are pictures hanging against the wall, of both of them. My mother is very young there, with red cheeks and black eyes and white powder on her hair. Papa has a blue suit, with great gold buttons, and ruffles on his bosom and round his hands—such little white hands! He has a white satin vest and a long queue. But then, your mamma is too beautiful. I heard my mother say so. It was after the drive yesterday, when she came home. My mamma was coming up the stairs, and papa and I sat in the great brown armchair, trying to get warm; for the fire was such a little wee bit! And then mamma stood, taking off her gloves, and looking so grave that papa asked her what was the matter.



“‘Ah! that sweet American lady,’ she said, with such a sad voice; ‘she is too beautiful! too beautiful! I see he lifts her from the carriage now.’ And then papa shook his head, and held me closer to him, and kissed me.”

“Papa always lifts her out of the carriage,” said I, standing up; for my breath came hard and my face was all aflame. “He loves to lift her and carry her up-stairs. That’s nothing new. She never did like to climb; and, in our house in America, we have almost a dozen rooms on a floor. Papa had it built so, because she dislikes to go up-stairs or steep streets, or hills—it doesn’t matter what.—Well, what else did your mamma say?” I asked, with a strange, jealous feeling tugging at my heart. I did not like to have my mother commented upon by any one who did not know or love her.

He shook his head, looking at the red geraniums that blazed outside the pane, where a small conservatory had been made, simply a casing of glass fitted to the window.

“You don’t like it,” he said, bluntly; “why should I tell you?”

“Because I want to know, and I will know,” I added, the jealous, angry feeling growing slowly as I waited. “Tell me all she said, and you shall have my singing top for your own.”

“And you will love me, and not grow angry?” he asked. “I don’t want your top, you know, because that would be a bribe; but I’ll tell you, if you promise not to be angry.”



“Pshaw! why should I be angry or not love you? You are not to blame for what your mother may say or think,” was my sage reply.

“Well, then, she said it was the beauty of death, that she had long seen how the beautiful American was failing, and that it was strange how many pretty American women died young.”

I felt the color slowly leaving my face, as the import of these terrible words fell heavily upon my heart. A feeling that I can never describe, a pain that was suffocating, deprived me almost of breath. I heard Rupert call my nurse, who was sewing at the other end of the room; but his voice sounded as faint as a whisper. I saw her coming; but the bright colors of her dress were dim, and her cap looked cloud-like and shadowy, while her brown, rugged face was like that of a phantom.

“What have they been doing with my child? she is as pale as a ghost and as cold as a stone!” cried the woman.

Not till I felt the warm clasp of her arms, felt my head resting on her shoulder, did that horrible stricture leave my throat.

“O nurse!” I cried, convulsively, “do you believe it? do you believe it? Tell me it is not true!”

“What has that young aristocrat been telling you? Of course, I don’t believe it, my pet! What has he said to you, with his proud airs and handsome face? Oh! I don’t like him. Believe what, my own one? Don’t sigh like that; it makes my heart ache.”

“Believe—that—,” said I, chokingly, “that—my mother, my blessed, beautiful mother, is going to die!”



I felt myself drawn closer and closer. It was she who sobbed now, quick, hard, dry sobs ; but, in a moment, she had conquered herself.

“What nonsense !” she exclaimed, though she busied herself with my sash and my hair-ribbons, and did not once look me in the eyes. “So that’s what the little French monkey said, is it ? Lucky he’s gone up-stairs, or I would treat with him for scaring my darling.”

“But, nurse,” I persisted, “why do you look so strange ? You are as white as your cap-strings. Tell me, didn’t papa always lift her out of the carriage ?”

“Always !”

“Then, why should people talk of it, and think it strange ? Didn’t she always have red in her cheeks ?”

“Always !” said nurse, again ; but her voice faltered and her lips trembled.

“And she is quite well—just as well as when she came here ?”

“God forgive me !—yes : why shouldn’t she be ?”

“Nurse,” said I, solemnly and with all the vehemence of an outraged child’s heart, “you are telling me a lie !”

There we stood, face to face ; I, indignant, frightened, awed ; she, pallid, startled, conscious that, for very love’s sake, she was trying to deceive me. And still she did not speak. I sank slowly down into the chair behind me, strengthless, nerveless. The nurse rose, moved away from me ; but I called her back, and, clinging to her hands, broke into uncontrollable sobs, and so wept, till nature was quite exhausted.



## CHAPTER II.

### MY COUSIN PHILIP.

SOMETIMES there comes to me, as in a vision, that splendid *salon* that belonged to our Paris home. Traces of my mother's exquisite taste lingered in all the hangings,—the delicate furnishing of blue and gold ; the absence of mirrors, and, in their stead, beautiful pictures of the best masters, particularly engravings, of which she was passionately fond : and papa was always bringing home something new.

Our landlord was a slender little man, whose skin seemed dried on his bones ; and, as he walked, one looked for him to rattle. He wore a snuff-colored coat adorned with huge jet buttons ; his forehead shone like glass ; his eyebrows met in the middle over an owlish nose ; and he wore a red wig till dinner time, when he replaced it by a black one. I have forgotten how many wigs the little man deemed essential to his comfort ; but I know he had them of all shades and shapes, and gloried in the different disguises they made for him. Monsieur Bouve in a corn-colored suit of hair, the curls falling against his shoulders, could hardly be recognized in the curt, sardonic little man, who never needed to knit his brows, because nature had done that for him, but who, in a black, crisp wig, would have frightened a beggar off with a look. I believe the man fitted the wigs to his business, meeting his



creditors in black, his friends in brown, and his tenants in the handsomest of all, the corn-colored wig, in which he could play the benefactor to perfection.

“He spends a great deal of money on them,” his sister would say, with a melancholy shake of the head; “enough to buy a little cottage in the country, that I have dreamed of all my life. I had much rather keep hens and chickens than accounts. It does no good to speak to him, you know; for he is as a child, and will have his way. He says he can afford it because he lays it not out on pipes and wine. But then, so as the money goes that should be put in a house, where’s the difference?” and a shrug and a sigh ended the sentence.

I was now and then allowed to go down-stairs to the queer little rooms where they kept their modest house, all by myself. Very dark and very neat it was, so full of odd corners and cupboards, and windows that looked out on a dead wall and admitted but little light, that a sense of mystery always penetrated me as I entered them. Both he and Verdiroide, his sister (who might have passed for her brother dressed in neat brown calico, so closely did she resemble him), seemed quite delighted to see me, and always made me welcome with a bit of fruit, a few nuts, or perhaps a delicious orange. With the unthinking deference of ignorance, they made me very well pleased with myself. I now see why: my father was called the rich American. As if I had been a woman of twenty, Miss Verdiroide would gravely talk with me on fashion, and never wearied of telling how many lords and



ladies had rented their hotel, and what magnificent parties the first and second floors had given, until I began to wonder why it was that my father had never emulated these shining lights.

But the brightest recollection of all is that of the great square of garden, around which the house was built. There was a clock of large dimensions against the south side of our hotel, and over it clambered the cool green vines in summer, whose skeleton stems in winter, showing their outlines through the snow, made a beautiful ornament. In this yard, adorned by a fountain in the centre, and lovely plats of grass and flowers, Rupert and I were allowed to play for an hour every day, accompanied by my nurse.

There were always two black-eyed, red-lipped little twins looking down from one of the balconies. Rich, the cook, was frequently passing through a long entry with shining saucepans in his hands; and sometimes a fat old man, who was called captain, brought out his dog for us to see,—a yellow dog, which he thought quite beautiful. Then there was the laundress with the canaries over the door, and who would stop her shining irons to come and talk to us,—very great nonsense it was,—that we were a couple of angels, and too beautiful to live. She herself was a pretty woman, with a high forehead and curling hair, and would sometimes get very cross with her two neighbors, old dames, who mended lace for a living, and whose yellow, parchment faces formed such a setting for their keen black eyes, that both Rupert and I called them witches, but only when we were alone together.



These, and the bits of children, three of them, who came every day with two violins and a tambourine—such dolls of babies, with eyes that shone like glass, and chubby little fingers that could hardly master the instruments, even to the extent of holding them, let alone playing! They were sure of money from me; for the great brown eyes of the tambourine girl had at once struck me with such a peculiar fascination that I often wished she could be my sister.

At home, we seldom had company. On certain days, a few friends came to see mamma, and I began to notice now, that they went away with grave faces. One morning I was called from my nursery: new ribbons were put in my hair and silver bangles on my wrists.

“It is a gentleman who has called,” said nurse, and led me to the parlor. My father was standing by a window, talking with some one, who, a moment after, turned and smiled. His noble bearing and beautiful soft eyes won my instant admiration. You will see from this, that I was always ready to take somebody to my heart.

“So this is your little girl—Ada’s child,” he said, folding both my hands in his. As I looked up at him, smiling, I saw an expression of sadness in his face, despite its welcoming smile. “She looks like my cousin,” he added, then stooped, and kissed me.

“Are you mamma’s Cousin Philip?” I asked.

“Yes,” he replied, “and you must call me cousin too. But how did you guess my name?”

“Because mamma has told me about you, and how you and she used to play together when children.”



A momentary look of pain crossed his fine face ; but, for all that, he smiled.

“ I am glad she remembered me,” was all he said.

After that, he came often, and seemed never so happy as when he was in the nursery, with Rupert and me. For Rupert was still my prime favorite, notwithstanding he had told me a disagreeable truth. The first terror of that dreadful shock had worn away, and I began to believe, that not only my mother was no worse, but that she was better. And so, taking counsel of my hopes, I stopped watching her and questioning my father ; and I had never as yet mentioned the matter to my cousin.

“ That’s a fine little fellow,” the latter said one day, as Rupert left the nursery. “ You will not like to leave him, will you ? ”

“ I am not going to leave him,” I said, with sturdy emphasis ; “ he is my dearest friend.”

“ Of course, next to the father and the mother ; I understand that,” he said. “ But you must not love him too well.”

“ One can’t love too well,” I answered, looking up into his eyes over which a shadow had fallen. I had always been remarkably quick at reading impressions, and I saw that something pained him—perhaps my flippant answer.

“ I think perhaps we cannot love too well, my little maid,” he said in his rich, low tones ; “ but it is not always wise or for our happiness. I had a little friend when I was of your age. I have never forgotten her. I love her now. She will always be dear to me.”



“But,” I said, “she is a grown-up woman now; maybe she has forgotten you—maybe she didn’t care.”

I did not mean to be impertinent. As soon as the words had passed my lips, I was sorry; for his face clouded all over, and he got up suddenly, and went to the window, where he seemed to be studying the blood-red geraniums, so bright against the blue of the heavens. To this day, I never see the flower without recalling his fine, dark countenance, sadder just then than any face I had ever seen.

Presently, he walked a little, back and forth, his hands folded behind him and his eyes cast down. I was observing him intently, my child’s mind groping about on the borders of my untrained imagination, for some excuse to frame for my rudeness. All at once, he stopped walking, and came towards me with one of the sweetest smiles I ever saw on mortal face. Child though I was, I dimly observed that he had fought many battles and come off conqueror in all.

“Do you like dogs?” he asked, now his own bright self again.

“Oh! dearly, dearly, Cousin Philip,” I answered; “so well that papa has promised to buy me one when we go on the continent—a Skye, or one of those royal little dogs, you know; but I don’t like little dogs, I want a Newfoundland.”

“That you shall have, then,” he made reply. “You must know there’s a pretty, bewitching little Newfoundland baby waiting for you at home.”

“Where is it? has mother got it? oh! please let me see it—please do, please do, Uncle Philip,” I cried, half wild with excitement.



“At home, I said,” he repeated, quietly.

“Well, is this not home?”

“It is your Paris home. I mean the home in America.”

“Oh! if it is away off there, it might as well be nowhere,” I said. “You mean at Hollyhoxy;” and my heart sank.

“Then you don’t like Hollyhoxy as well as you do here—the grand old home with its woods and mountains?” he said.

I shook my head. Paris was my birthplace—I loved it dearly.

“I don’t like it as well as here, and I hope we shall not go there,” I said. “Papa told me he would take me to Venice this winter. He has promised me Venice so long!”

“But your mother is anxious to go back.”

“What! to Hollyhoxy! so soon!”

“Yes; I think she is planning that way.”

“Then,” I said, slowly, my heart sinking down, “she is worse.”

He grew pale to the lips, but did not answer.

“Tell me, Cousin Philip, nobody else will, is my mother going to die?” I asked the question soberly and with a great gasp. My wild eyes frightened him, perhaps; for he drew me closer to his bosom, as one would hush a baby, from which place I quickly withdrew my head; for I could not bear to hear the loud beating of his heart.

“My child, we are all going to die sometime, you know,” he said, holding my right hand in one of his,



and passing the palm of the other over it again and again ; “ and, though I think your mother is not quite as well as she was when I left her at Hollyhoxy, yet, who knows, she may outlive the strongest of us ! ”

“ O Cousin Philip,” I cried, in a burst of gratitude ; “ thank you a thousand times ! I hope she will ! I hope I shall die before she does ; for you know heaven is a very large place, and it would be so delightful to meet somebody she knows ; and I should never tire, I think, standing at the golden gate and waiting for her. And now, if we must really go to Hollyhoxy and not to Venice, tell me something more about my dog.”

You see what a very child I was, quick to grieve and as quick to forget.

“ With pleasure,” said my cousin. “ In the first place, he is no larger than that,” measuring with his hands. “ Of course, he will grow very fast in a year, and perhaps grow graceful ; that we cannot tell ; he is clumsy enough now. In the next place, he is as white as a snowball, and, curled up, not unlike one. Next, he has a distinguished pedigree, and a remarkably handsome face. I think you ought to be very fond of your cousin’s gift.”

“ I am ! I shall be,” I answered. “ It makes Hollyhoxy seem pleasanter to look forward to meeting my pet. I know I shall love him so dearly ! ”

“ Love, love ! it is always love that draws,” murmured Cousin Philip. “ It is the only true preparation for the House Beautiful above, and for the blended glories of the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness forever.”



I thought Cousin Philip was preaching to himself, and the words made but a slight impression on me then. I could think only of Blossom waiting for me at home, and I ran, half sliding across the polished floor, to tell my mother.

Looking in before I entered, I saw a picture I shall never forget.



## CHAPTER III.

### MY MOTHER REASONS WITH ME.

**M**Y mother's room was divided from the main drawing-room by a heavy rep curtain, which, when it was closed, I always made a feint of peeping in, by bringing it round my face and under my chin, thus transforming myself into a Red Riding Hood, as I was pleased to think. On the great, wide, silk draped couch just opposite, my mother had thrown herself, as if in extreme agony. One hand was pressed to her side, the other outstretched and rigid, while her soft, luminous eyes, were lifted, imploringly and full of anguish, to heaven. I must have startled her; for I flew to her side, with a cry of terror.

“Mother! mother! what is it? You are suffering!”

In another moment, my mother had lifted herself into a sitting posture. Great drops of agony stood on her forehead.

“Hush, my darling!” she said, in a low voice; “do not speak of this—it is over. I am better now. Sometimes I have such turns at night—seldom in the day-time. I would have spared you the knowledge—but—” her lip trembled. A tear hung on her eyelids.

I could only stand, and gaze at her, still trembling from the acuteness of the pain the sight of her anguish



had given me ; but, as I saw the light soften in her eyes, and that terrible glaze disappear, and the beautiful color return, I began to sob, in my great thankfulness.

“ I don’t wish to sadden your young life, darling,” she said, in her low, sweet voice ;—I have never heard another like it ;—“ and you know, that generally I am very happy. But I have some little pain to bear, at times. It don’t last long, however ; and, as I know nobody can cure it, I keep it to myself whenever I can. God helps me do that, darling ; it is not very hard.”

“ But why should you suffer, when you look so well and so beautiful ?” I sobbed.

“ That is a question I dare not ask, my dear. I believe it is God’s will, therefore I try to be patient.”

“ Then I don’t like God, if He wills you to suffer !” I cried, with a sudden outburst of anger, and stamping my foot in a rage. I felt as if my throat would burst, and my eyes burned till I could almost see the fire in them.

My mother got hold of my hands in some way, and held me with her soothing touch, saying nothing, but looking, oh ! looking at me so pitifully.

“ God does not will it, my love, in the way you think. Do you remember the acid that was spilled upon papa’s fine pictures ?”

Yes, I remembered perfectly, and told her so : it bit all the way through. There were thirty or forty lovely engravings, large and small ; but they were all spoiled.



“Yes,” said mamma, “it bit all the way through. That is the trouble with me.”

I looked at her with wider eyes.

“God didn’t drop the acid there, but its constituent parts were all of His creation. It was His will that those parts, united, should bite, or eat through. So with me; and I want you to understand me thoroughly. Generations ago, this peculiar disease, through some sin, doubtless, fastened upon some ancestor of mine; and, so, passing over some generations and touching others, it has at last come down to me. Don’t you see how natural it is?”

“Then shall I have it?” I asked.

“God forbid, my darling! No, I think I can say with certainty, that you will escape it; for all your father’s thought, and mine, has been so to train you that the seed may never even germinate. But you do not feel that anger against God now?”

I shook my head; I was ashamed.

“Are we going to Hollyhoxxy?” I asked.

“Yes, dear; I want to see the grand old place before”—

“Don’t say it, mamma!” I almost shrieked, throwing myself, in a passion of tears, at her side, as I held my hand to her lips.

“I must say it, my darling; and you must hear it, and learn to look forward to it. I have been wondering how I should find the courage to tell you, and wonderfully has He prepared me. Papa knows it; Cousin Philip knows it; strangers, even, see it in my face. Sit down, daughter, and let me tell you where



I am going ; and—yes, I can say it, even to my sweet child—how I long to be gone.”

I must have been closeted with my mother an hour or more, when my father came in, and found us clasped in each other's arms.

It was not her touch, not even her love, that thrilled me so deeply now, as the sweet faith and trust which made her description of Heaven unutterably beautiful. I looked upon her as no longer mine, but as belonging to the angels.

She had told me, also, Cousin Philip's history. It seemed, that he was only her cousin by marriage,—that, some years before, he had met with a great disappointment. The young lady to whom he was attached, being the only remaining single daughter of an aged and infirm mother, decided that it was her duty to remain with her.

“The mother,” said mamma, in a still lower voice, and looking very pale, “objected to the marriage of each of her children ; and only this last one has obeyed her, from a sense of filial duty. Perhaps to her only may be pronounced the ‘Well done, good and faithful servant!’” It was years after before I understood the import of this speech.

“Oh, now I know what he meant when he told me of the little girl he used to love so dearly, even when he was as young as I am,” I said. “But why can't he get somebody else for a wife?”

Mamma smiled, as she answered, “That is not like Cousin Philip. But, though it had sent him a wanderer over the face of the earth, and nearly broken



his heart, the trial had acted as a purifier and ballast to his half-wrecked manhood ; and he had come forth from the great sorrow of his life with all the dross burned out of his nature, and the nobler metal of the spirit refined and assimilated to a God-like nobility that gave him the power of a master among men.



## CHAPTER IV.

### MY FIRST LOSS.

PARIS, glorious Paris! was of the past. The voyage, long and dreary, was over; and my mother still lived. We were all at Hollyhoxy, a place quite idyllic in its beauty. Its name was given to it in this wise:—

On my first visit to the old homestead,—I was then only three years old,—I caught sight of some flowers that reminded me of the hollyhocks in the garden of our Paris home, and stretching out my arms, I cried, delightedly,—

“Hollyhoxy!”

“She has given the place a name,” said my father, turning laughingly to my mother; “henceforth our American home shall be called Hollyhoxy.”

And such a home! Just on the borderland between country and city, it comprised the beauty of a rural landscape with the easiest facilities of reaching the conveniences and pleasures of cultivated town-life. A perfect network of trees surrounded the house, enclosing wide lawns, glorious gardens, with whose incense the air was heavy all through the spring and summer seasons, and where flashed the light of fountains all day long. My mother revelled in her garden. There was a great easy-chair, made of gnarled branches, which could always be covered



with cushions and spreads, and around which a kingly elm made a curtain of cool shade, where she would sit, with me beside her, for hours, sometimes pointing out the perfect beauty of the landscape, the wonderful coloring of woods and skies, sometimes listening to me as I read.

It did not pain me now so much to think of the possible future, though my heart clung to the frail, beautiful creature, clothed with the light of Heaven as with a garment ; for I think even then she lived in Heaven.

Blossom was often our companion ; and his queer little lump of a body, and his awkward attempts at gamboling on the grass, were always a source of amusement to the dying woman. Yes, I knew now that she was dying.

“ When I am gone, Ada, you must be every thing to your father,” she said to me one day. “ He has been every thing to me. He took me from a home of wealth ; and, when my proud family shut their doors upon their disinherited child, he made a solemn declaration, that I should yet have every luxury to which I had been accustomed. Nobly he kept his word. Wealth seemed to pour in upon him from every avenue ; and since then my rich kinsmen have seen fit to take back all they have said. But I tremble when I think how successful he has been, and still is,—how every wish seems to be given to him. I tremble for him when the trial comes. There is inherent in him a certain morbid tendency, which it must be your office, if possible, to counteract.”



“O but, mamma, what can I do?” I half sobbed.

“You can do every thing by loving him dearly through all. You can do much”—here my mother paused a moment—“by telling him, by-and-bye, what I have told you. The afflictive hand of discipline sometimes unfolds the sweetest pages in human nature; it may be so with him.

“I hope you are a Christian child,” she said, some moments after; “I want you to live the ‘life beautiful.’ There is such a life, possible under all the ills and disappointments that await every human being. And, living thus, lead your father to the light. Talk of me, and of Heaven, in some twilight hour. He is a good man; he would not wrong a human being, or his own nature, willingly. But, as to his religious views, he is singularly reticent. Go to our minister; I have had long talks with him about you both. I am afraid,” she added, with a broken voice and a pained look, “that your father has no settled religious faith. He has been so prosperous that he has learned to look only to himself. And to be a doubter, my darling—oh! it is to me so terrible, so terrible! Life is a long, dark mystery of silence to such, and full of deep, treacherous quicksands, wherein the doubter plunges and is lost, unless some helping hand is near. If it were only bridged by faith, then there would be no danger.”

“O mamma! how dark it will be when you are gone!” I cried in my anguish.

“Try to think of me as with you still,” she said, softly. “There is no separation to those who love.”



“But, mamma, I am not a Christian,” I sobbed.

“You are trying to be,” was her gentle reply.

“Oh! all the time.”

“Then, my darling, if you will only keep trying all your life, and only trying, I have no fear for you. The light will shine some day. Only, remember always, that He loves you, and Jesus, my Savior, will also be yours.”

She had never talked to me before quite so freely; but, in my childish way, I had always more or less comprehended her life, and that was a sermon from day to day.

Alas! darkness came before light. The waxen figure in its casket seemed too vitally beautiful to be put into darkness, as it lay in the great east parlor; and the lovely flowers that bloomed everywhere, on her breast, on her coffin, made the atmosphere oppressive.



## CHAPTER V.

### UNDISCIPLINED.

**B**UT all that had gone before was as nothing, compared to our return to the empty house. My poor father could not endure it. He had not shed a tear at the grave ; and I, when I looked at him there, recognized the full weight of the responsibility which my mother had put upon me, to try and console him.

The gloom and pallor of his face shocked me ; also, his changed manner towards me. When I tried to throw myself into his arms, he repulsed me. I still hung on to him ; but, though with some degree of gentleness, yet he released my hands.

“ Go, child, go !” he said, bitterly. “ I have lost all that made life endurable ;” and, catching up his hat, with the long crape dangling, he thrust it on his head and went out into the night. In vain I tried to talk to him of mamma and Heaven.

“ You ! what do you know of Heaven ?” he cried, with almost savage bitterness ; “ you, a prating child !”

I was alone ; for, at that moment, I knew that my father’s heart had gone from me.

Oh ! the desolation of that repulse, of that sad hour when this terrible truth came to me. It almost changed my nature. I, a girl of thirteen, who till now had never known other than the most transient trouble, to lose father and mother at one blow.



I threw myself down on the great lambswool mat, and wept a child's bitter tears. The room was very dark, save for the fitfully white gleams thrown over it now and then by the fire, which was always lighted towards evening.

There was a slight rustle, as of garments; and I thought I heard my name called. You who have loved and lost, can you remember those supreme moments when a wave of strange, bright hope has broken over your soul, and, just for one sweet, blissful second, the dead are in your arms again? That slight noise had brought back my mother to me. I almost forgot that she was under-ground. On my knees, I threw my arms out, yearningly, crying, "Mother! mother!"

For only answer, I felt a cold touch on my hand; and, looking down with a chill sensation of fright, there was Blossom, gazing up at me with an expression that seemed at the moment almost angelic, and that made me feel as if he knew all about it. Yes, God was good. He had sent me some little consolation, bereaved as I was; and I caught the curly creature to my heart, bedewing his coat plentifully with my tears, while his stumpy tail wagged as fast and cheerfully as if it were a human tongue trying to cheer me with consoling words.

"From this hour," I sobbed, snuggling my face in his warm neck, "you shall be my dearest friend!"

Nurse, whom I had sent away, ventured to look in after awhile, and smiled, as she saw me carressing Blossom.

"Where is your papa?" she asked. "The tea is waiting."



“He took his hat and went out,” I answered, ready to sob again.

Nurse lifted her hands in holy horror.

“Who ever heard of such a thing?” she cried. “His wife scarcely under the sod, and he gone out!”

“He couldn’t bear the house: I don’t wonder. I’d go out, too, if I dared,” was my reply. Much as I had suffered but now, I could not bear to hear my father blamed.

“Well, then, you’ll come to tea, deary; there’s a bright light there, and it’s too gloomy here,” she said, coaxingly.

“No; I don’t want any thing. I hate the light! Let me sit here with Blossom. I am content. I couldn’t eat; it would choke me. Oh! if I could have you back, mamma, just one little moment!” and I threw myself down again, sobbing.

“Poor child!” said the nurse, and went out, wiping her eyes.

Presently the housekeeper came in, a heavy featured, stately personage, who was a great deal too dignified to stoop to coaxing. I had never taken kindly to the woman. Children and dogs, it is said, can detect shams in human beings when nobody else can. My mother had given this woman the place out of great charity; and, having once entered as housekeeper, she knew how to retain her post.

There are some persons whose lives are one long series of plots. Nothing with them is perfected, except through management. I had detected the housekeeper with false headaches, in false errands and little



underhand tricks which she thought perhaps a child might not notice or understand. Consequently, I had no faith in her: neither had Blossom, young as he was.

“Miss Ada, you must have your tea,” she said, with some attempt at gentleness. “You will be sick, which goodness forbid now!”

“I’m not going to be sick, and I don’t want my tea, Mrs. Davis. Please go out;” and I hid my face again in Blossom.

“Miss Ada,” said the housekeeper, coming a step or two nearer, “there’s nobody here to tell you what you must do and what you mustn’t; and so I take it upon myself to *insist* upon your coming out to your tea.”

For answer,—her allusion to my dead mother stung me,—I am sorry to say I took off my slipper and threw it at her. It hit her exactly in the middle of a too prominent nose; and one can hardly blame the poor woman that she was very angry. She went out of the room with my name on her lips, coupled with a very inelegant adjective.

Not long after that, as Blossom and I sat like two statues, it seemed to me that the door opened and footsteps advanced. I thought it might be my father, and waited, with a wild throbbing in all my veins, for him to give me some token of his presence.

“Och! now, the sorrow of her, poor darlint,” I heard muttered low at my ear. “An’ no wonther; for the swatest woman iver drew breath is laying low, this minnit. Me own heart’s ready to break for her.”



I looked up, with a wild cry. Another minute and I was in Bridget's motherly arms, and we were sobbing together. She understood me, servant though she was; she had always understood me. She and Pat, her husband, who was our man-of-all-work, had been at the homestead for twenty years.

"An' here's the bit dog keepin' you company! and the crater's not had a taste of vituals for the day, scarcely. I'd not wonther if he was starved."

"Oh! give him something to eat immediately, Bridget," I said.

"An' so I will; but I think the crature'll take it best from your own hands, darlint, and so I made bould to bring in a sup and a bite for ye, here, on the little silver waiter, d'ye mind, so ye and Blossom can take your tay together."

"Oh! how good of you, Bridget," I said, wiping the streaming tears from my eyes; and that sad night Blossom and I took tea together, and Bridget waited upon us.

I went to sleep with Blossom tucked in my arms, and did not know till next morning that my father's non-appearance until a late hour had frightened the servants, who went out to search for him, and found him at last, prostrate upon my mother's grave.



## CHAPTER VI.

### A TALK WITH COUSIN PHILIP.

**T**HREE years had passed. I was sixteen, beautiful, and my own mistress. My father, from the day of my mother's funeral, had ceased to interest himself in me; and, indeed, during two out of three of the intervening years, I had been to boarding-school, and returned home at my own request. If I wanted money, I had only to ask for it: for all the rest, amusements, friends, acquaintances, I must please myself.

I carried the memory of my mother with me always; but, some way, the presence that had once been so overpowering was now the long, lingering picture of a tender dream. All the more serious recollections were crowded out. I was rich, mistress of my own time, bowed down to, looked up to; and the sunshine of prosperity made my path a golden one. I do not know that I was particularly worldly minded; but I am sure that I was not in the least degree spiritually minded. I had been much with people who considered religion old fashioned and behind the age, which had begotten in me a certain carelessness about sacred things. My Bible, which in my mother's day I had never passed the twenty-four hours without reading, was like a sealed book to me now. Some of the lighter novels—thank God! the worse sort never



fell into my hands—took its place. At church, if I thought of the sermon, it was only to criticise ; at home, I was full of plans, and an active brain kept me always busy at something. But, at times, I grew painfully aware that mine was not the “life beautiful” which my mother wanted me to live.

The refurnishing of Hollyhoxy had lately taken place under my supervision. The house was so built that all the apartments on the first floor, with the aid of draperies, could be thrown into one ; and, when newly furnished and well lighted, the effect was very charming.

There were two rooms which I rarely entered—my father’s study and his private sitting-room, in the west wing. As I before mentioned, since he had repulsed me, after my mother’s funeral, he had taken but little personal interest in me, except to see that I was provided with teachers in music and drawing. Other attentions than these he never seemed to think I required. If he sometimes met me during the day, it was with an absent kind of smile that pained me by its lack of expression. The morbidness of his nature, which my mother had alluded to, now absorbed the whole man. He seldom spoke to me, except on matters of business, and never, to the day of his death, mentioned my mother’s name ; nor would I have dared at any time to speak of her to him. And, ah ! I loved him so ; all the more, I think, because separated from him by a wall I could neither see nor break down. That part of my mother’s commands I never ceased to fulfil—night and day I loved him,



and sometimes woke up with my face all wet with tears, because, in some happy dream, I fancied he had kissed me.

He could not have been more indulgent. He was quite willing that I should fill the house with my friends ; go where I pleased, with a proper escort ; and do as I liked in all things, after my studies were over,—provided, that I would never trouble him. Thrown thus upon my own resources at so early an age, deprived of the influence of a mother at the very season when I needed her most, is it a wonder that I grew up undisciplined, with an overweening sense of my own importance, since I had but to order and be obeyed. Still, I think I was generous in temper, though proud of my position.

Mrs. Davis had never quite forgiven me for throwing my slipper at her nose on that terrible night of the funeral ; and, as I had always found it impossible to like her, I had given up trying. I would willingly have dismissed her ; but, as I have hinted before, she knew how to hold her own, and I now know that she exerted an undue influence upon my father.

I had a new maid, as my old nurse was married and gone away ; and Martha Voles had been in my service nearly a year. She was a tall, handsome girl, gifted with the faculty of making herself perfectly indispensable to one's use and happiness, and sufficiently educated to warrant my making her more or less a companion, particularly as she flattered my self-love by a deferential manner, that, as I see it now, could only have been assumed for a purpose.



Blossom had grown to a magnificent size, and was my only intimate friend, brute though he was. There seemed to be a perfect understanding between us, as befitted two boon companions. White, tall, sparkling from head to foot, with an almost human consciousness vitalizing his instinct, his eyes luminous as if there were two suns behind them, his sympathy complete,—is it any wonder that I loved him dearly? He knew, by a glance of my eye, or my finger, when to be silent and when to prepare for a frolic. On nearly all occasions, he was by my side. I really needed no other protector. All night he slept stretched just inside my door. For my maid, Martha Voles, he never manifested any friendship. He would allow her to caress him; but he never responded, and, if she spoke to him, would turn his beautiful head away, with an indifference, that, if human, would have been simply insulting.

Once or twice I caught a glimpse of the girl's black eyes, when looking at Blossom, that troubled me; but it seemed only natural that she should dislike him.

As for me, I believe I was rather pleased when Blossom turned from everybody else to me—with one or two exceptions. Cousin Philip,—who had been travelling, but was now settled for a time at Littleford, boarding in the red, two-storied country inn about half a mile from Hollyhoxy, because, he said, the sheets smelt of lavender and the kitchen was always clean,—was Blossom's second love. Ah! how dear was Cousin Philip. He seemed, to me, almost to take the place of my father; and I think I looked



up to him, though he was a much younger man, as if he had been.

He came over to Hollyhoxy when I returned from boarding-school. He said he had made his fortune, and had nothing to do but to read and write books and oversee me. It was delightful to look forward to his coming. I made pleasant little plans for his recreation when he came. We sang and walked and rode together. He was to me what my father should have been, and his presence was one continued holiday.

“Why won’t you leave that funny little public house, and stay at Hollyhoxy?” I asked him one day, as I sat in my mother’s favorite chair on the lawn. Blossom was at my side, shining like silver from the tip of his nose to the tip of his tail.

“You don’t know what a comfort that little house is, dear, with its wide rooms and low ceilings. A breath of my youth comes back as I enter it and smell the herbs on the staircase. Then, the view is beautiful, the host obliging, and Mrs. Stearns an incomparable cook. I can sit and write, with nothing to hinder, from hour to hour, with plenty of wide, breezy upland and blue sky about me. There’s a queer old body called Andrew, with crooked legs, who makes it a point, four times a day, to hobble in and see if I am comfortable. He never says a word; but, if the fire wants mending, or the window shutting, or any thing goes wrong, he knows and corrects it. I shouldn’t know how to get along without poor old Andrew. But I love to come here and have a



talk or a sing with you—though sometimes—I—think—”

“You think papa don’t like it,” I said, with my old-time bluntness.

“I’m sure he don’t; he is always uneasy till I go, when he knows I am here.”

“I don’t understand it,” I said, with a sigh; “papa is a mystery to me. Think how he used to love me when mamma was alive.”

“And he still loves you, no doubt, only disease has changed him.”

“Disease! I am sure he is well enough,” I said.

“Bodily, yes; mentally, no,” said Cousin Philip. “His mind is darkened through the blow which he never would fairly admit was coming. I foresaw this on the day of the funeral, when he seemed unwilling to speak to me. Before that, he was always tender and affectionate. Poor man! The world is full of sunshine; but, oh! what shadows lie, like cold, bleak mountains, between homes and graves, between hearts and hopes, between earth and Heaven even. Your father’s soul is full of shadows; he has no Christian hope.”

“Then,” I exclaimed, “how can he live?”

“He does not live; his face is that of an automaton. I have seen him walk with his hands behind him, and, for an hour, could have counted just so many seconds between each step: never any more.”

“But he thinks.”

“After a fashion, yes; but probably of nothing but the past, and of his money schemes. Those come to



him as if by inspiration. It seems as if fate, having left him nothing else, delights to fill his coffers with gold. I never saw such a prosperous man."

"Is there such a thing as fate, Cousin Philip?"

"To me, it is only another name for providence. I sometimes think, when I look at your father, There is a body with all the soul drained out."

"O cousin, what a horrible thought!" I cried.

"Well, what else can I think? Your father may be charitable as to gifts; but what active part does he take in any of the wonderful things going on about us? He never attends church; and, when your mother was alive, it used to be the prettiest sight in the parish to me—your father and mother sitting, with you between them, in the old family pew. Now the artificial has supplanted the divine. I believe your father has brought himself to doubt religion, and even God."

"I hope you are mistaken," I said, secretly uneasy on account of the turn our conversation had taken; for was I not myself practically a doubter? and I did not care just then to have my conscience stirred up, remembering that the lightest cause, the smallest excuse, was sufficient to keep me from church, and that I really felt no interest in such matters when I came to probe my own consciousness.



## CHAPTER VII.

### MY MAID MARTHA.

JUST then a figure came out of a side door, sweeping long garments over the grass, and moving towards the housekeeper's window.

"Who is that?" asked Cousin Philip.

"That's Martha Voles; you've seen her, my maid."

"Yes, I think I have, but always in repose. A right queenly walk she has; but I don't fancy her."

"Neither does Blossom," said I, smiling.

"Sagacious fellow! Let me advise you to distrust whoever Blossom does not like."

"But, Cousin Philip, Martha is a very nice girl," I said, "and more like a friend than a servant. She has ever so many accomplishments, and suits me in every particular. She can alter and trim dresses beautifully, do up my hair like a French *modiste*, read to me when I am tired, talk well, and even play my accompaniments when I sing by myself. I am sure I don't know how I should get along without her now."

"Why in the world did she enter your service, or anybody's service, indeed if she is all that you describe her to be?" asked Cousin Philip.

"I don't know. All I do know is, that I needed just exactly such a person, alone as I am, with nobody near that I care to speak to, when you are away, but



Bridget ; and, good and kind as she is, she is scarcely a companion for me. And I did not dream of her value at first. It grew upon me, unfolded itself little by little, until she became quite a study. I suspect I have not found her all out yet."

"No, I fancy not," said Cousin Philip, gravely and rather grimly. "How old is she?"

"Only eighteen ; a little more than two years older than I am."

"Only eighteen !" thundered Cousin Philip, lifting himself from the leafy couch on which he had been lying ; "only eight and twenty, you mean."

"Why, Cousin Philip !" I was very much astonished, and rose also.

"With that walk, and that figure ! only eighteen ! humph ! Well, let it go," he said, rapidly. "If she has deceived you in the matter of her age, it is an offence of which more than one of your sex might plead guilty. But where did you get her ? What references did she bring ?"

"None," I said.

"No references ! no written certificate ! no letter from any friend ! no family ! But how could you be expected to know about these things—and I away ? She certainly told you something. Did she live anywhere hereabouts ? Did she live in the city ?"

My cousin looked so shocked, and spoke, for him, in so stern and almost threatening tones that I was distressed, both for myself and him.

"She came to me at a time when I was very, very lonesome," I said,—“when I had not long returned



from school,—and missed them all so—you can't think."

"Yes I can, dear ; I know just what the feeling is," he said, soothingly.

"Bridget let her in. It was a rainy, dark, gloomy day ; and I was so wretched ! She told me,—Bridget,—that there was a young lady in the parlor, waiting to see me,—that she had no card with her, but she was very anxious to speak with me. Supposing it was one of my friends from the city, one of the Florimels or Laskeys, I went down, and there sat a stranger.

"‘I heard you wanted a maid,’ she said, in a low voice ; and you’ve no idea how sweet her voice is. It took me quite unawares. I didn’t know what to say for a moment ; but, when I had gathered my wits together, I replied that I did, but added, ‘It can’t be possible that you are looking for such a situation.’

"‘That is what I came here for,’ she said ; and there were tears in her beautiful sad eyes. ‘I have no mother, father, or friend : I am a stranger here and only by accident learned that you wanted a maid. I am willing to work. I can sew and knit, make beds, and help in any thing I am called to do. Wages are of little account ; I want a home ; give me what you please ; only try me. If I don’t suit you, I can go away.’

"Poor thing ! she seemed so lonely ! so like myself, that my heart warmed to her instantly. I never thought of asking her where she had lived, or if she had any references, or any thing else. I just told her I would try her ; so she came, and she has been here ever since."



"I dare say she had heard what a silly, little confiding thing you were," said Cousin Philip, fondly. "But didn't it occur to you, that she dressed rather well for her station?"

"So you have noticed that! I thought such things as ladies' dresses were of no interest to you."

"Neither are they in a general way; but it is with reference to your welfare that I note every thing now. It appears to me that her clothes are costly."

"Some of them are, but I suppose she has earned them. She formerly kept school, she says; and she seems very fond of nice clothes,—fonder than I am, I think. But she has proved herself such a good servant, why shouldn't I believe her?"

"Surely, why?" said Cousin Philip, with a grave, amused smile; and then he sauntered off a little way, whistling to himself, a habit he had when deep in thought. Presently he came back, with a clouded brow.

"I wish your father would take a little more interest in matters pertaining to you. Why didn't you consult with him?"

"Consult with papa! you don't think I'd have gone to him!" I made reply. "Why, I've not spoken to him even about house matters for the year that I have been at home. If any thing is needed, from a towel to a latch-piece, Mrs. Davis comes to me, and I give orders either to Pat or to Drinkleigh. Drinkleigh is to be discharged, so Mrs. Davis says, and papa will get a new agent. I do hope it will be somebody who don't get drunk and swear as Drinkleigh does; it's horrible!"



“My poor, dear child !” said Cousin Philip, with a glance of deep pity. “You won’t have these trials to bear many years longer, I hope.”

“I suppose you think I shall marry by-and-bye,” I said, laughing.

“I sincerely hope you will, if the right man comes along. And, as for this Martha Voles,—is that her name ? I’ll make some enquiries, and see what I can find out about her. I sincerely trust she is all you think she is ; but some unaccountable prejudice has taken possession of me with regard to her antecedents. Come, send Blossom for your hat, and walk awhile with me.”

Blossom was off like the wind before Cousin Philip had finished his sentence, and came back by the time I had fairly risen from my seat. So, accompanied by my two faithful friends, I left the lawn.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### MEETING DOCTOR HENRY.

THE roads were cool, the air was sweet, and the low western sun kindled leaf and branch into a red glory. Our way lay through a thin belt of woods, just enough of forest shadow and fine perspective to allow one to think there were interminable forests beyond.

Under our feet, the pine-needles slipped; and the woodland blossoms were some of them very beautiful, especially the *trillium*, whose leaves were just changing to the lovely rose color that foretells their decay. In and out among the thick herbage, crept the gold-thread with its star-like flowers.

When we emerged into the open, the road stretched long and white before us, bordered by tall, wide-branching shade-trees. Small white clouds, like delicately cut cameos, flecked the blue-gray sky; and the now low-lying sun, casting golden tints on every leaf and vine, made them enchanting pictures of still life.

Presently, we passed the pretty Gothic church, ambitiously called "All Angels;" and there we met the rector coming out of the dear old romantic parsonage, with its back-sloping roof and its irregular outlines. He was walking hurriedly past the gate, his forehead all curled and knotted, his necktie all ends, and his capacious hat thrust on the back of his head, from



under which the clustering chestnut locks fell almost to his eyes.

“Why, doctor, what’s the matter?” asked Cousin Philip, who, knowing him intimately, was aware of his peculiar eccentricities. Instantly the cloud cleared away, leaving the broad forehead smooth and fair. and the large, mild, dark eyes smiled with their usual benignity.

“I’ll tell you,” he said (he always spoke rapidly and with short, curt sentences). “I’m angry with these doubting people, these bilious growlers, who think the world began and will end in themselves. I’ve been reading some of their abominable rhodomontades. How they do muddle things! Now see. We have changed our minds over a thousand times, about as many changeable things. Science is a growth. Very well. God put all the natural world under the dominion of man’s progressive energies.”

Here he stopped to tip his hat a little further back and to lay one forefinger over the other, a way he had, even in the pulpit. “Science may, therefore, discover,” he went on, tapping finger on finger. “What it does and shall discover, however, is nothing *new*. It may be new to us, I grant you; but to nature”—and here he straightened himself—“it is as old as the world itself. Like Liliputians, we climb all over some of God’s sleeping mysteries, and try to bind them to our own use, and, with amazement, call them *new*!”

I wish I could transfer the fire and energy and beauty with which he enunciated as he went on.



‘ Well, perhaps it is new to us. Our circle of vision grows larger, the light of truth stronger, and our capacities more intense, as we grow into these modern times ; but, looking from the higher plane, it must be something humorous to see us little people on the earth going wild over some of the great God’s old laws, which we have just found out and applied. Dear, dear ! after all, what small puppets we are !—and how do you do, Miss Adeline, and how is your father ? Can’t you get him to church now and then ? I’m sorry, always, to find him so indisposed to have a chat with me. But let us hope he will come round right, all in good time. By the way, Miss Adeline, that Sunday-school weighs on my soul terribly. Three hundred little ones wanting to be instructed, and only half teachers enough. Haven’t you a little time to spare to the Lord, my dear,—just a little time ?”

He did not wait for an answer,—my cheeks were red with conscious feeling,—but he drew his shovel hat from the extreme back of his head down to the very roots of his nose, nodded courteously, and passed on.

“What a good, good man !” said Cousin Philip, reverently. “I always feel, in his presence, as if before one of God’s messengers ;” and he lifted his hat as he spoke.

“Yes, he is good,” I said ; “the sick beds and the poor, and even the wicked, attest to that. But isn’t he very learned ?”

“Splendidly : one of the best Greek scholars I ever



knew, though in every point of theology,—which I maintain is the greatest of all sciences,—indeed so learned and so eloquent, that, if he were a lawyer, you would find him living in a brownstone palace in New York, and driving a team of fine horses if he wished it.”

“Then, pray, what has he come to this little place for?” I asked.

“My dear, I might reply, Why did the Son of God come into this world of sin and death, and leave His Father’s glory?” said Cousin Philip. “No place is too small where there are human souls to be saved, and no talents too splendid to be employed in so great a work. That is what convinces me of the genuineness of the Gospel—great souls leave great worldly possibilities to work for very small profit to themselves, barely a subsistence, in order to obey the Master’s call.”

Just then a young man passed us on horseback. The horse was an ordinary hack; but the rider sat superbly, and, before he turned his head away at our earnest gaze, I perceived that his face was well featured and resolute, that he had handsome whiskers, and that his eyes were dark and remarkably penetrating.

“That’s a fine looking young fellow,” said Cousin Philip. “I like a man of that sort—a splendid figure too. Do you know who he is?—anybody living hereabouts?”

No; he was a stranger to me. I could give my cousin no information.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BLACKSMITH'S FORGE AND LITTLE POLLY.

**I**N sight of the old forge! its sides all reddened, making the dull, black rafters above more than ever conspicuous. The ruddy fire threw out long lines of vivid light; the forge resounded with the heavy but skilled blows of the artisan; and there, grandly outlined in the dusky splendor of the flame, stood Ben Riddle, the blacksmith. His white shirt, massive shoulders, handsome, florid face, and leather apron, formed a picture more glowing than ever the trained hand of the professional artist could transfer. We stood a moment, in the fast deepening twilight, to look our fill. Outside, the dreamy silence was only intensified by the chirp of the cricket, the occasional laugh of a child, or the dull droning of wheels, bringing home the empty market carts.

Presently Ben stopped work, and came to the door, passing his large hand over his head. How wild he looked! his hair straggling fifty different ways over his bold forehead, the black door framing him, and the lusty fire in the shop making a luminous background.

“Going to see Polly, miss?” he asked, as he suddenly discovered us.

“Do you think she will care?” I asked, coming forward.

“O yes, it’s one of her good days; and I’ve took



notice she's generally <sup>so</sup> better after you've bin in ; so does my woman. I hope you'll do us that favor."

"Thank you, Ben ;" and I introduced Cousin Philip. "Shall I find Polly down-stairs ?"

"Yes, indeed ; down-stairs I expect, and as fine as a fiddle, poor lass."

Leaving Cousin Philip to talk with the blacksmith, I crossed the road, followed by Blossom, and knocked at the door of Ben's tidy little house. Mrs. Riddle presented herself, a thin, homely woman, with a large mouth and freckled face, her hair done up on the top of her head about the size of a walnut, and a comb two inches wide sufficing to keep the grayish brown knob in place.

"I'm real glad to see you," she said, slowly, looking wistfully down the long road, then standing aside for me to pass into the tidy but stuffy parlor. "Polly's real bright to-day—for her;" and, going to the foot of the stairs, she called the girl's name twice, in a loud voice.

I had seated myself in the small horsehair rocker, when I heard a strange, rustling noise on the stairs, and presently Polly stood before me in all the wedding finery, even to the veil, the gloves, and a pretty, faded bouquet of flowers, that looked as if it had been kept with great care.

"I'm so glad you've come in time !" she cried, running forward to meet me, and greeting me with a bright smile.

"In time for what, Polly ?" I asked.

"For the wedding, of course ;" and, as she stood



there, the red in her cheeks and the mist-like muslin falling about her, I could readily excuse the poor young fellow, so much above her in station, who had hoped to make her his wife. She brightened the whole room, this lovely Polly Riddle ; and her bearing was as gentle, her motions were as graceful, as those of any little lady to the manor born.

“ I’m expecting him every moment,” she said, in a slightly flurried manner. “ How do I look ?” and her fingers fluttered among the ribbons.

“ As sweet as a picture, dear,” was my answer.

“ O thank you ; I’m so glad you think so. You are one of his station in life, while I am humble and poor. He is going to take me to the city ; but he says I shall see them sometimes. I could never forget *them* ; you don’t think it would be possible for me to forget *them*.”

“ It ought not to be, Polly,” I said.

“ Of course not. Well, I must be quiet, and not get nervous. I shouldn’t like to have the wedding turn into a funeral, you know. There have been such cases.”

“ You mustn’t think of such a possibility,” I said.

“ Of course not ; but do you—I—get so tired—so tired of waiting !” Her voice sank into a whisper.

“ I remember one wedding, where the groom was brought in stark dead, killed !” she added, in a hollow voice. “ It broke the wedding up, and the marriage bells began to toll a funeral march, and the bride fell down like one dead ; and never, never after could she bear to hear the whistle of a steam car—oh ! there it is now—in the distance—and my Harry is coming !”



She sat down in a chair, all a heap of white, and held her breath till I went over to her and took one of her small gloved hands in mine. Poor child ! they had reared her so tenderly, their beautiful one flower. No touch of toil had fallen on her, no common tasks—and all for this !

Presently Blossom put his white face against the window, and began to whine. At that Polly came out of her trance, shivered a little, and looked appealingly into my face.

“Do you think God cares ?” she murmured, her gaze so unspeakably sad, compounded of childish wisdom and childish doubt, that I felt the tears coming into my eyes.

“I know He does,” was my faltering reply.

“Then, if He cares and knows all about it, it will be best to wait, won’t it ?”

“I think it will,” I said.

“Sometimes it seems as if all the world forgets me, Harry and all.”

“I won’t forget you, Polly ; and Harry—Harry never forgets, I ventured, taking courage from her sympathy and her quiet.

“O no—only it’s weary waiting so long ; sometimes I think it will be always waiting, only waiting, till I die ;” and her poor head dropped on her hands.

“I wish you could stay with me ; you help me so much.”

“I wish I could ; but I will come again soon. Now if I were you, I would take off that pretty dress, and keep it till Harry comes.”



“I will,” she said, rising wearily and kissing me good-bye. When I left the room, her mother was standing at the door.

“Do you think she’s better?” she asked, eagerly.

“I hope so,” was all I could say.

“Now I’ve got to go and help her take off all them things ; she gets so dead tired when she puts them on. It’s only lately she’s been able to bear the sight of ’em. I’m sure I don’t know what to think—whether it’s for better or for worse.”

I found Cousin Philip standing inside the forge ; and the soft glow of the fire enwrapped him as with a glory, while he talked to Ben in the intervals of the sharp clang of smitten steel.

“Ah ! there you are, little one,” he said. “Good-bye, Mr. Riddle ; I’ll come again.”

“Uncommonly fine mind, that great hulking blacksmith ; though he handles English as if it were a horseshoe, to be beaten into any shape he pleases. What a contagion there is in hearty work, heartily done ! I felt as if I wanted to take hold and hammer the iron myself.”

“Did he say any thing about Polly ?”

“Not a word, except when you went away, he sighed, ‘Poor little Polly !’ What is the matter with Polly !”

“Her mind is gone,” I answered. “Two years ago she was engaged to a young lawyer by the name of Thorne. They were to be married, and she was dressed in her bridal outfit, waiting for him, when that terrible accident took place at Berry Creek, not half



a mile from our house, and he was one of the killed. The shock unsettled her reason, and she has never recovered."

Cousin Philip walked on in silence. I could see that his heart was touched.



## CHAPTER X.

### FINDING THE GLOVE.

**D**ARKNESS had gathered over the pines as we entered the narrow, woody path leading homeward. I leaned on Cousin Philip's arm; and Blossom, like a shadowy ghost, bounded forward and back, making his way to the house by a series of zigzag movements, which were very ludicrous.

How pretty the house looked as we came in sight of it. The lights on the lower floor streamed out on the lawn; for the curtains were not yet closed. I coaxed Cousin Philip to take tea with us (we followed the country custom of dining at noon).

"Cousin, is this your glove?" I asked, as I picked up a pearly tinted kid glove, that lay nestling among the lace drapery on the carpet, just under the window.

"Mine! I never wore that color in my life," he said, "even for evening dress."

"Then whose can it be? it is certainly a gentleman's glove."

"It certainly is," he made answer, comparing it with his own. "You see it's the same size that I wear."

I ran out into the hall. Bridget was just coming into the supper room, followed by Mrs. Davis.

"Supper is ready," said the latter.



“I’ll be down in a moment,” was my reply, and went up-stairs. My room was in admirable order, the gas lighted, flowers on the table; and Martha Voles, putting some last touches at the bureau, came forward to take my wraps.

“Anybody been here, Martha?” I asked.

“Nobody, miss;” adding, presently,—“that I know of.”

“Then whose is this glove?” I asked. Her cheeks flushed a dull, dark red, and she affected to examine the glove.

“Where did you find it, Miss Ada?” she asked; and I could see that she was ill at ease.

“In the east parlor, close by the window. What a dandy, whoever he is, to wear that color!”

“Who, miss?” she asked, turning to place my hat on the table.

“That man who came here. For of course somebody came, you know: the glove didn’t come of itself.”

“Now I think of it,” said Martha, in her strong, clear voice, “there was a gentleman came on horse-back; but he didn’t come in, at least in this part of the house. Curious about the glove,” she added. “Perhaps it’s Mrs. Davis’s.”

“You know Mrs. Davis’s hands are as small as yours, Martha; she rather prides herself on her hands,” I said, studying the dark, delicate outlines of Martha’s face, as it was turned profile towards me.

“Shall I take care of it?” she asked. It seemed to



me there was a sort of suppressed eagerness in her voice. Cousin Philip's questions occurred to me; and, for the first time, I distrusted my incomparable maid.

"No, thank you; I'll put it in my pocket for the present," I said, and went down stairs.

Papa, as usual of late, did not come in to tea.

"Did you carry him something?" I asked of Bridget, who waited upon table that night; for I noticed that Mrs. Davis set some buttered toast aside and poured an extra cup of cocoa, which Bridget took from the room.

"Me, miss!" exclaimed Bridget, in an injured tone; "I never go nighst the master, miss. I'm not young, neither handsome."

"Then who did?" I asked, rising from the table, while Mrs. Davis turned red and fidgeted with the tea-tray. A sort of suppressed eagerness marked Bridget's manner, as she answered,—

"It's your own maid, Miss Lina, as carried him in his supper, and as always do do them sort o' things."

A great silence fell upon us. I looked at Cousin Philip with unfeigned astonishment, and he raised his eyebrows as his glance encountered mine.

"I don't quite understand it yet," I said, as, with my cousin, I left the room. "I never presume to enter my father's presence, unless I am summoned; and this girl carries his meals to him. Does he understand what her position is here, I wonder?"

Just then Martha Voles came down to tea, called by the servants' bell. I was flushed, nervous, and



angry, hardly able, in fact, to restrain my tears. It was very hard to feel that my maid was preferred before me.

“Martha,” I said, detaining her, “I understand you sometimes carry my father his meals when he is indisposed.”

“I do, sometimes, Miss Ada,” she replied, quietly ; but her forehead colored.

“How came you ever to think of such a thing?” I made angry question.

“Mrs. Davis wished me to at first, to relieve her ;” and she looked so innocent and sweet standing there, with the hall light brightening her wonderful, dark face.

“If it displeases you, I will stop ; you have only to forbid it,” she said again. Strange that I felt my heart go out to her, even in the height of my indignation.

“I will speak with you about it some other time,” I said, a little ashamed of my own haste and suspicion.

“Now, Cousin Philip, what am I to do ?” I asked, as I seated myself beside him at the moon-lighted window.

“I’d like to know how long this thing has been going on.” The question was spoken more to himself than to me. “She is quite pretty—and capable, no doubt.”

“What are you thinking of ?” I asked.

“How long did you say she had been here ?” was his question, after a little pause of silence.



“Very nearly a year.”

“And you have accorded her unusual privileges?”

“Why, yes ; I could hardly help it. She seems so much superior to her position, and is always so gentle and ladylike.”

“She does not eat with the servants?”

“Only with Sally, the upper housemaid, and Mr. Drinkleigh. Bridget always waits upon them.”

“Bridget is worth them all,” he said.

“Yes, in sterling honesty. Bridget is a good creature, and I love her dearly. But, Cousin Philip, you have not yet told me what to do.”

“It is wisest not to precipitate matters with people of that calibre,” he made reply. “She is either a candid, innocent woman, that Martha Voles, or a deep, designing character, whose plans are carefully laid and whose designs are mapped out with faultless accuracy. In the latter event, she could easily outwit you, my poor little cousin ; for you are candor itself, and have no weapons with which to fight deception, ignorance, and cunning. Your father is a very rich man,” he added, after a long pause.

“O Cousin Philip,” I cried, trembling, “why do you speak of him? It can’t be possible ! the very thought agonizes me. O Cousin Philip !” and my head fell on his shoulder, while tears ran down my cheeks like rain.

“Hush, hush, child,” he said, tenderly, passing his arm about me. “It was of her I was thinking, more than of him. Your father, changed as he is, would not voluntarily cherish any feelings that would do



your own angel mother injustice ; but he is, to all intents and purposes, a recluse. In fact, I go further, and treat his isolation as a mild case of insanity. He has grown to hate mankind and detest society. You have hitherto given way to all his whims ; indeed, you were but a little child at this commencement of his dull, brooding life. Unfortunately, he could not lean upon you, and you could not counteract his tendency to melancholy. At last you have drifted apart."

"Oh, it is too true !" I sobbed. "My own dear father is as a stranger to me ; and how could I help it? But I will !" and I started up. "I will be his servant, if he will let me. I would gladly fetch and carry for him, I pity him so. And yet I tremble whenever I go near him," I added, piteously. "He don't, he can't, love me."

"Yes, dear, he loves you," said Cousin Philip ; "but trouble acts strangely upon some natures. He has never recovered the shock of your mother's death. But let us not talk about it any longer. To-night I will think the matter over, and give you the benefit of my cogitations to-morrow. Let me have some old-fashioned music—'Bonnie Dundee,' for instance."

I went to the piano, and played for him every simple Scotch air I could think of, though my mind was perplexed and my thoughts were busy with my father and Martha Voles.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE HOUSEKEEPER'S VISITOR.

THE notes of the music still rang out, while Cousin Philip, who had risen from the *tête-à-tête*, was making the rounds of the room, looking at the few but very rare pictures that hung upon the walls. Suddenly he paused behind me, and began to talk in a sort of ecstasy.

“Art, poetry, and music are so many diverting agencies to control the heart and soul of man,—so many outlets to his impassioned nature,—so many streams to the overflowing fountain of his joy. They express, in design, imagery, and symphony, the three great characteristics of our common nature—our innate yearning to imitate, our passion to give utterance to thoughts, and our love of harmonic sounds.

“Art, poetry, and music are the triune divinity of genius!”

“And the poor little things like me, Cousin Philip, who have no genius—” I said, with a sigh that came near being a sob, for my heart was full.

“You mistake, my dear little cousin,” he said; “you have just the genius that shapes the destinies of the world for good—the genius of creating a paradise wherever you are. You look up at me with surprise—ah! you remind me so much of one I may never see again. You do not know what I mean, nor can I



describe it fully. Suffice it to say, that you have the art of making friends, and, what is better still, the secret of keeping them. For instance," he added, laughing, "look at Blossom now."

I turned my head ; and there at my side sat the dog, an almost human love in his great brown eyes. It seemed to say, "If I could only read your heart!"

"Yes, Blossom does love me," I said, the tears coming into my eyes ; and, being rash enough to respond with some slight caress, before I could prevent it, the two great silken paws were round my neck, and, in as delicate and gentlemanly a way as he knew how, Blossom was kissing me from eye to ear.

"Dear old faithful fellow !" I said ; "but, bless me ! the dog even knows that I am a poor little stupid, that I haven't even the genius to control him."

"You have the genius of making home and common things attractive," said Cousin Philip. "Now, there is Miss Langston, for instance ; she writes admirable poetry and can keep an audience spellbound for hours, if so she will ; but I have it on the authority of a friend, that she holds a quiet life in abhorrence, and does not like to take her curl-papers down till noon. Now, if I were a young man and were going to lay my life, my love, and my honor at the feet of a young girl, it would not certainly be such a one as Miss Langston, though she is decidedly beautiful and unmistakably a genius."

"That may be so, Cousin Philip," I said ; "but probably such a woman sees completeness in herself. She has a thousand resources, ten thousand friends and



admirers. Perhaps she wouldn't thank you or any man for falling in love with her."

"Perhaps not," was his reply; "and yet I understand Miss Langston, after her present engagement is finished, will marry. Her *fiance* is enormously rich and ridiculously old, for her."

I was just passively listening now, touching a chord here and there, and straining my senses to hear another voice, whose plaintive cadence came through a window on my right, that communicated with the hall leading to the housekeeper's apartments. It was as one pleading for his life, and was answered by the sharp, wrathful tones of Mrs. Davis.

"I must see what it means," I said, and hurried out of the room. Martha Voles, half way down the stairs, a strained, strange expression in her face, turned at sight of me, and went rapidly up-stairs again. I hurried to the housekeeper's room, conscious of a scarcely suppressed wonder if my maid had been listening.

Opening the door that shut the front hall from the back, I came upon a *tableau* that startled as well as pained me. Backing away from Mrs. Davis, who stood on the threshold of her own living-room, pale with anger, was a man, or rather a man-shadow; for he seemed to be in the last stages of consumption, and the glare of his unnaturally large, hollow, burning eyes frightened and grieved me when he turned them upon me with a scared, pained expression.

Mrs. Davis, short, florid, flashing, seemed trying to control her rage; but her voice sounded choked and



unnatural. At sight of me, the pallor gave way to a quick flush, and, for an instant, her eyes seemed to shoot vindictive lightning. As I came upon them, the man was holding out his thin arms like a suppliant, and the agonized expression of his face was something terrible to see; but his arms had fallen against his side, and his hollow chest rose and fell with heavy panting.

“What does this mean, Mrs. Davis? Does the poor man want something to eat? Take him into the kitchen.”

“O he’s no tramp, miss,” said Mrs. Davis, with a threatening side glance at the man; “it’s one who hasn’t his proper senses, and there’s no knowing what mischief’ll be done if he stays round here.”

“I’m not mad, miss,” said the man, his hollow cheeks sucking in with every word. “It’s only that I want to do justice before I die.”

“You talk of justice!” said Mrs. Davis, with a short, sharp laugh that set her cap-ribbons in motion, and stepping forward with a half leap, at which the man-shadow recoiled in evident fear of bodily harm. “You’d better be gone, or I’ll complain to the master and have you put where you won’t get out very soon; not so soon as you did before,” she added, with a significant nod.

The man-shadow turned his shining eyes from her to me, opened his thin lips; then, his whole figure drooping like one who had received a mortal blow, he turned, in a spiritless way, and walked slowly toward the door.



"I'll see that this thing doesn't happen again," said Mrs. Davis, sharply, though there was an obvious relief made evident by the change in her voice and manner; "for I shan't let you off so lightly next time, be sure. These travelling impostors take such unaccountable notions," she added, as the thin figure passed on, and she turned to regain her room.

"It seems to be somebody you know," I said; for the wretched man had appealed strongly to my sympathy, so apparently suffering, so helpless.

"O yes, he's been here afore, and I've helped him agen and agen; and he's lied, and deceived me. It's always so,—do good to some folks and they'll turn and rend you. Sure, you could see the man is demented and ought to be shut up. I don't want to be murdered in my bed."

"Horrible!" I shuddered; "but that poor man hasn't got strength enough to make an attempt on anybody's life."

"Don't you believe that," she retorted, quickly. "When a man is out of his senses you can't trust him, sick or well. Now, if I hadn't held that fellow with my eye, there's no knowing what he might have done. I've had experience with that sort. Lucky Martha wasn't here," she added, and then bit her thick, round under lip. Evidently she had spoken without thought; and she gave signs of confusion, which, quick as I generally am, I could not help seeing.

"You don't mean Martha Voles," I said, my suspicions roused. "What had she to do with him?"

"Nothing, of course," said Mrs. Davis, hastening to



correct the impression she saw she had made ; “ only she is that soft and sympathetic. I make no doubt she’d have fainted away to hear me go on as I did. She’s very tender in the nerves, is Martha.”

“ Indeed !” was my reply, “ I have never found her so. On the contrary, I think self-possession is one of her greatest characteristics. I have often wished I had half her nerve.”

“ Well, pr’aps you’re right and I’m wrong,” said Mrs. Davis ; “ of course I don’t know her as well as you do, not seeing her so often.”

“ Mrs. Davis,” I said, for I thought now was my time to speak, “ I don’t like to have Martha sent on errands to my father, particularly to take in his food when he stays in his office. You know there is no need of that ; there are plenty of other servants.”

“ Surely,” said Mrs. Davis ; but she went from red to white in a way that was not only unpleasant to see, but to me, who knew her moods, suggested the idea that she was both uneasy and conscience stricken. It was very strange ; and, the more I pondered upon it, the more I was puzzled. Mrs. Davis and Martha had met as strangers ; and yet I could not forbear the impression, that, in a very brief time, they had become affiliated and more like old friends than acquaintances. Moreover, I had often puzzled over chance likenesses and expressions and ways of speech, which I always tried to persuade myself were due alone to my imagination ; for Mrs. Davis had but little comeliness, and that of the rustic kind, while Martha Voles, as Cousin Philip said, could certainly lay claim to superior beauty.



“But then, *I* don’t see the harm in it,” she added, with an attempt to smile graciously, to appear more at her ease. “Martha’s always so willing, and isn’t so silly as to think, like some, that such things is beneath ’em. However, it’s as you say, of course ; you are the mistress.” Something in the cadence of her voice, in the expression of her countenance, stung me.

“Certainly I am the mistress,” I said, “and I wish you to see to it that my wishes are not disregarded ;” and I swept away ; holding my head as high as possible, while she slammed the door behind her. When I reached the parlor, Cousin Philip sat on the sofa in a brown-study, and Blossom couched beside him with his nose buried in the fleece of the great rug.



## CHAPTER XII.

### AN INTERVIEW WITH MY FATHER.

THE next morning, when I was in the conservatory, talking to Patrick about some of my choice plants which were drooping, my father sent for me to come to his study. Surprised at the message,—for hitherto I had always sought him,—I drew off my gardening-gloves, laid down my shears, and, after making some slight change in my attire, I went, not a little anxiously, to meet him. Had Mrs. Davis taken the opportunity of seeing him, and had she dared to make use of my name or interfere with my privileges?

I found my father just entering his office, and followed him. He greeted me as usual, scarcely looking at me; but I fancied there was a little degree of cordiality in his voice, though there was none of that warmth in his manner due to his close relationship.

“I was thinking,” he said, as I sat down opposite him, “that your sixteenth birthday is close at hand.”

“Yes, sir,” I said, “it wants but three months of the time;” and my heart grew full and warm at the thought that he had remembered it.

“We must not let the day pass unacknowledged,” he went on, lifting and letting fall, from time to time, a small ivory ruler. “There ought to be an entertainment,—I don’t like the idea of a ball,—and given



in good style. There must be a band from the city, and Gerard shall supply the tables. I wish to spare no expense. Whatever you need in the way of upholstery, I would like you to order, and—oh! how about dresses? You will want something new and fashionable. Consult your own taste, and just fill out this blank—no; on second thought, I will do that myself; you are generally quite too modest in your desires.”

I sat there, spellbound and grateful, looking at him. He was very pale; but that something noble in his expressive face, that had always fascinated me, gave him a dignity above all other men. There were dark circles under his eyes; and I fancied he still retained the look of suffering I had seen at my mother's funeral.

My dear, dear father! How my heart went out towards him! Could he not see it? If only there had been the least token of affection in his manner, any indication that my love was something more to him than the gratification of my wishes, I could have leaped to his side, and given him kiss after kiss, and held him close as I longed to be held; but his manner was so cold, so calm, it frightened back all my warmer impulses. He sighed frequently and heavily, and every few moments looked abstractedly into the empty air or at the opposite wall, quite ignoring me. I felt that I could not, dare not, try to conquer his mood. As I took the check, which he had more than generously, lavishly, filled, I did think, for one little moment, of appealing to his fatherly instincts; but just then the door opened, and somebody came in.



I was standing opposite the table and my father, and I did not turn ; for it seemed as if the heavy eyes before me lightened and my father's brow grew clearer.

“My daughter, this is the new agent, Mr. Clewes ; Mr. Clewes, my daughter, Miss Ada Stewart.”

I had moved by this time, and was aware of a pair of dark, searching, magnetic eyes, belonging to a man of majestic figure and bearing. It was the same person I had seen on horseback in the twilight of the day before. He bowed with a graceful inclination, his eyes fastened to my face, while I felt the color burning deeper on my cheeks. The contrast was certainly very great between the squatty figure and burly, hardened face of Mr. Drinkleigh and this refined-looking, handsome man.

“You are to take orders from my little girl, Mr. Clewes, exactly as you would from myself,” said my father, a shade more of color in his voice. “She has a wise head, young as she is, and, when I am indisposed, attends to the business as well as I could myself. She has often been my right hand ;” and here he gave me a smile that I certainly must have returned with a kiss, if we had been alone. As it was, I bowed with all the dignity I could command, and slowly left the place, haunted by the eyes of my father's new agent.

I went directly to my room, which Martha was patiently setting to rights. The girl looked up as I entered, opened her lips as if about to speak, then, apparently changing her mind, rolled my easy-chair to my favorite place by the window. I had always



been so alone since my mother's death, that, when Martha came, I grew childishly garrulous. I had readily gone to her with all my little plans, talked over my every-day duties; and she had chatted, in the same familiar way, of her past life, the schools she had been to, the people she had known.

These relations of almost affectionate familiarity had never been disturbed until the incidents occurred which had made the preceding day almost painful to look back upon. I had, however, partially forgotten my brief season of anger; and it was not in me to sit for any time with a human being within sight and not talk.

"You have seen the new agent, I suppose," I said, as I took up my lacework and sat down to the window. "By the way, that must have been his glove," I exclaimed, suddenly remembering the episode of yesterday. "How in the world did it find its way in the parlor? I am quite sure papa would not have taken him there."

"Somebody let him in perhaps," said Martha, calmly, "until Mr. Stewart could be informed of his coming."

"Yes, that must be it; but what a fop to wear such gloves!" and my cheeks grew hot at the thought that the glove was in my pocket.

"I'm sure a fop will be better than the other miserable man," said Martha, with a furtive glance at me. "Did you see him this morning?"

"Yes," I answered, not without a curious look at her; for there was that in her voice which quite



roused me from my own reflections. "He certainly is a much better looking man than Drinkleigh."

"Isn't he rather handsome?" asked Martha.

"Yes, fine looking, I should say," was my cautious reply; and then I lapsed into thought that was verging on the romantic, and was awakened to consciousness only when my lace-frame falling to the floor I found myself being narrowly watched by my incomparable maid, upon whose lips sat the faintest myth of a smile.

"It is so hard to think up things when one is going to give a party," I said.

"Are you going to give a party?" she asked, her manner suddenly changing.

"Yes, something of the kind. Papa objects to calling it a ball, and I'm afraid there won't be any dancing. I half dread it, there will be so much to do. I think I will have printed notes; it will be easier, and they can be finished in dead gold, with a bit of blue flower, a forget-me-not, in the corner."

"It's just delightful?" said Martha, with increasing animation. "What with the invitations and ordering things, and the excitement of preparation,—and then you will have a new dress of course."

"I suppose so," I said.

"Suppose so! Why, of course you must; you haven't a real party dress in the world calculated to do service for such an occasion. I know, or fancy I know, just what will suit your style,—lavender silk and satin, and rich lace for trimming, with rosebuds scattered among loops and folds."



“Lavender? oh, no; that’s too old for me. It would suit your style, not mine,” I said.

“Why, I’m not so very much older than you,” she said, in a slightly aggressive tone; and her cheeks flamed up.

“Well, then you look older than you are,” I said, bluntly. “Cousin Philip says you look twenty-eight.”

She was silent for a moment, and bit her lip hard.

“Your Cousin Philip dislikes me. I knew it from the moment I first set eyes on him. And, besides, I saw him smile one day when Blossom growled at me, as if he was delighted. I don’t think I shall try to convince him about my age. *He* is old enough at all events.”

“He’s splendid, old or young,” I said; “and he is not yet forty: I’m sure that’s not very old for a man;” and I should have added something harsh had I not at that moment perceived the rector turning into the avenue that led to the house, and guiding his strong black horse like a soldier, for he rode superbly.

I had become accustomed to the good rector’s visits during my mother’s last sickness; but, since my return from boarding-school, he had not often made his appearance at our house. My father had once or twice given him the cold shoulder, and I felt a little in awe of him, so that he was never made very comfortable at Hollyhoxy. Breaking in this morning upon our rose-colored anticipations of feast and fun, he certainly was not a welcome sight to me; and I rose very slowly to go down-stairs, for there was no one else to receive him.



"Why don't you send down 'Not at home,' as others do?" asked Martha.

"Because I will not lie," I retorted, briefly.

"Well, you needn't lie, as you call it," she said, while I took off my work apron; "you are simply not at home *to him*."

"I don't see the difference," I said, "unless I send word expressly that I am not at home to my callers. That would be ridiculous as well as unkind; and I wouldn't hurt Doctor Henry's feelings for the world."

So saying, I went down-stairs, and found the rector in the hall, hat in hand.

"How do you do, Miss Ada? fine day. Have been riding twenty miles or more."

"Then, pray sit down," I said; "you must be tired."

"A little—but then—you heard of the explosion?"

"No, indeed! What was it?"

"A boiler burst in Joyce's Camphene Works. Twenty men killed and wounded, and most of them belong here. I assure you, Miss Ada, I have seen some suffering this morning."

Always the shadow of sorrow! Why had he come to me, on this day of all others, to fill my mind with visions of anguish? And yet, as he talked the tears rolled down my cheeks when he painted the wild lamentations of mothers and wives as they received their dead, of dear little children calling the unconscious father; the utter despair of some, the pressing wants, the poverty, of all. I thought of my check, and ran up-stairs to get it.



“Mercy on me !” cried Martha, turning pale, “what is the matter ?”

“An accident, and ever so many poor working-men killed,” I said, as I took the check out of my drawer.

“Well, they might as well die,” said Martha, after a pause. “The poor wretches had no comfort in life ; maybe they’ll find it in death.”

“Martha, your heart must be hard,” I said, chokingly. “Just as if they didn’t think of their wives and their little children and their homes quite as fondly as the rich !”

“No, they don’t,” said Martha, almost harshly. “I’ve been there ! I mean I have seen them, and know how they live and suffer.”

I left the room, and flew down-stairs.

“Take this,” I said, “and do all the good you can. I was going to buy a new dress with it—to dance in and be gay ; but those poor souls, oh ! it will help them bury their dead.”

“But this is too much, Miss Ada ; you will deny yourself beyond measure if I take it. Your father—”

“My father has nothing to say about it,” I cried, eagerly ; “the money is all mine. I can get more for the asking ; and, as for the new dress, what do I care for a new dress when he scarcely knows me in the old ?” and the tears came for a moment fast and thick. “No, Doctor Henry, take it all. I couldn’t enjoy myself a moment if I spent that money now. I only wish it were more. I will try to give more some other time.”

“Ah ! child of luxury,” he said, sweetly, taking



my two hands, "you will know after this what *true* luxury means. You are your mother's own daughter, God bless you!" and, gently bowing above my hands, he went away, leaving me heavy hearted, and yet, in a strange way, happy. For, if Doctor Henry had gone through the whole vocabulary of commendatory sentences, he could not have found one so incomparably precious as that—

"You are your mother's own daughter."



## CHAPTER XIII.

### GOING TO SEE COUSIN PHILIP.

I WENT slowly up-stairs, drying my eyes.

“ You didn’t give it all to him—you couldn’t !” said Martha, turning white.

“ I did, every cent of it, and there’s none too much. It will only last long enough to bury the poor fellows.”

“ Five hundred dollars !” repeated Martha, slowly. How long one has to work for five hundred dollars,” she added, her voice lingering along the words.

“ How much you must love money, Martha,” I said, looking up in some surprise.

“ Ah ! but think of working two and three years for five hundred dollars, and having then to dole it out so grudgingly. You have never known the want of money.”

“ One would think you hadn’t to see your clothes,” I said, unkindly.

“ My clothes—oh ! it’s the first time you ever spoke so. Yes, I will dress,” she added, almost passionately. “ I’ve toiled and slaved, you would never dream how hard, to get my nice clothes, even to almost starving myself. I bought silk and velvet, bit by bit, and hoarded it as a miser would his gold. I began when I was a little child ; it was the ambition of my life ; and oh ! how I have envied those poor



rich fools, who know nothing but how to dress, and could spend their money lavishly, while I must stint and save and suffer"—she paused a moment, breathing hard—"yes, I believe I would almost sell my soul to be rich."

"Martha, such feelings will end in making you wicked," I said, with unreasoning solemnity.

"I never made any pretence of being very good," she said, her cheeks and forehead red, and plying her needle more rapidly. "I can do my duty though, and I try to be contented. But, pray, what are you going to do about your dress, to change the subject? It's a sort of coming-out, and you ought to do justice to the occasion. Will your father give you another five hundred dollars?"

"I suppose so, if I ask him," I said.

"Of course you will."

"No, indeed!"

"What!"

"No, indeed;" and then I added, breaking through my usual reticence on that subject, for I had seldom spoken of my father in her presence, "If my father loved me as men ordinarily love their children, I would not mind telling him what I have done." The instant I had spoken, a sharp regret assailed me. What did that quick gleam, that rippled all over her face like a triumph, mean? I was startled into silence.

"What, doesn't your father love you?" she asked. "I didn't think that; I thought he was one of those silent men, who make no display, but love the more deeply on that account. You astonish me!"



“I don’t know that it is any thing to you, either way,” I said, for I felt heated and angry.

“No, of course not,” she responded, in perfect good temper. “You must excuse me; but really it seems so odd that a father shouldn’t love his child—his only one.”

“My father does love me,” I retorted.

“Oh, excuse me; I thought you said he did not.”

“Well, we often say things on the impulse of the moment that we don’t just mean.”

“Indeed! I thought you never did; you are so seriously particular.”

I gave a great sigh, and held my lips hard. I wanted to quarrel, to cry, to fall on some sympathetic breast and get comfort. Whom had I to go to? Nobody. Oh! how my heart went out to that lonely tomb, where I had last seen that silent, upturned face. My heart cried, “Mother!” a hundred times a day. It looked no higher as yet. It had not learned the way up the ladder of prayer. Cloud and thick darkness surrounded me. My only and most intimate companion was a woman who would almost sell her soul for money; and Mrs. Davis disliked and avoided me. Thus, in that great house there were no hearts and no altars upon which I could repose. I was as utterly alone as if in the solitude of the woods.

How longingly I looked forward to Cousin Philip’s coming! When it was past his usual hour, I could not wait. Calling Blossom, I wrapped myself up, and sallied out to the little tavern where he had taken up his quarters. The house had been built by an eccentric



individual named "Uncle Shaddock." It was said he had once been the possessor of an immense fortune, which he had run through; and, when he came to his last five hundred, he suddenly changed his career, cut all his boon companions, went into the country and on a turnpike road, built him a house, married a woman famous for her cooking, and kept a tavern for wayfarers, teamsters, and country merchants. The house was painted red, with white trimmings; and it certainly did present a queer appearance as one came upon it from a by-road, standing there a red waymark, its windows all furnished with thick white curtains, its porch all covered with creepers, summer and winter. Uncle Shaddock seemed very happy. He was a man of great natural capabilities, past fifty, with a bald head, sandy eyebrows, blue eyes, a square nose and chin, and a sunny smile that did one good to see. On Sundays he always played the flute; and the passer-by was regaled with old "China" and other solemn melodies.

As I came in sight of the house, a horse stood before the door, saddled; Uncle Shaddock's nondescript dog was running furiously under and between the horse's feet, barking with all his might; and, inside, could be heard the cheerful laugh of mine host.

"Dear heart, he's had headache," said the equally sunny hostess, as her broad frame came in sight; and she pointed upwards with the great wooden spoon in her right hand to indicate that she meant my cousin.

Blossom preceded me up the white, broad stairs; and Cousin Philip, looking somewhat pale, let me in,



very glad to see me, he said. His room was large, square, low ceiled and sunny, a real treasure of a room to comfort-seekers; and his bed occupied a large niche made by taking down the partition of a smaller room.

Will my readers credit me that I felt far happier there, looking out upon the winding road, the hedges, the hills, and basking in the sunshine, than at Holly-hoxy, with its wealth of upholstery and its general splendor?

Cousin Philip was just getting over one of his royal headaches, he said, as he gave me his great calico-covered rocking-chair. He had heard about the accident, and given something for the aid of the sufferers. When I told him what I had done, he grew very thoughtful.

"My little girl must learn to use her judgment," he said, softly.

"But if I had thought of it a year, Cousin Philip," I said, "I should have given it all."

"And the dress?"

"I must go without it."

"Indeed, that you shall not do; I will see to the dress. You shall have your money back."

"Not a cent," I said, firmly.

"Not a new dress from me?"

"No; not a new dress from you even. It would make me feel as if I hadn't given any thing."

"But what shall you do, my dear?"

"Fix up something, I don't care what; I am too young for much dress. O Cousin Philip!" An idea



had seized me with such force that it drove the blood into my cheeks and forehead.

“Well, what is it now?” he asked.

“You saw mamma when she was married?”

“Yes, my child; and she looked as lovely as an angel,” he answered.

“I have that dress: would it be sacrilege to wear it? to have it made over for me? It is just the loveliest white mull, with silver threads woven in.”

“I confess I should like to see you in it,” said Cousin Phil, with a sigh and a smile. “It is more beautiful than any thing you can get here; for it was made to order abroad.”

“And papa, do you think he will mind? Do you think he remembers? will it be any pain to him?”

“A wholesome pain, perhaps,” said Cousin Phil. “You are growing very like your mother.”

“O Cousin Phil, do you see it?” I cried, running to the mirror. “I almost pray, every day, that I may grow like her; but I am large, and she was so dainty and tiny. My eyes are like hers though, are they not? and my hair, a little?”

“I believe I will see you home,” said Cousin Philip, rising and going to the window, a sorrowful look in his face. Did I also remind him of one from whom he was forever separated? It made me both glad and sorry to think it might be so. But I soon forgot every thing else in the pleasure I felt in making over the beautiful stuff that had been my mother’s wedding-dress. Even Martha confessed that it was something finer and more costly than I could have bought in the city.



“But are you not afraid of it?” she asked.

“Afraid of it!” was my astonished exclamation.

“Yes, that it will bring you ill luck. I couldn’t be hired to wear the dress, or a shred of it, that has been worn by the dead.”

“But it wasn’t worn by the dead, but the living,” I said, despising her silly superstition.

“All right; it’s not my wearing,” she said carelessly.

“No, I guess it isn’t: you never saw my mother,” I thought, as I pressed a bit of the material to my lips. As if any thing she had worn could bring harm to me!



## CHAPTER XIV.

### MY FIRST PARTY.

WITH the enthusiasm of a child, I counted the days as they passed. My father had sent for decorators from the city ; and they took the first spacious floor into their own hands, draping, illuminating, ornamenting, till it seemed a veritable bower of beauty. My dress was finished, and pronounced perfect, both by the dressmaker I employed and by Martha, only the latter said,—

“ You will look too much like a bride.”

In my secret heart, that was just what I wanted to look like—a bride. I wanted to see if my father would notice me, or be startled or pleased. I walked on air at the very thought that I might in the least attract or interest him. I meant to be the lady of the house, dignified as well as amiable. I knew he would wish me to sing, and practiced all my best pieces.

“ If I had your voice,” Martha said to me one day, “ I would be the richest woman in America. But Heaven has denied me the things I most want, while you have every thing lavished on you, and don’t care.”

“ O yes, I do : I care for my voice, because it makes others happy.”

“ And envious,” she muttered, in low tones.

It seemed to me that the new agent came to me very often, though perhaps not oftener than he judged



absolutely necessary. Mr. Drinkleigh had, in a general way, used his own judgment; and I gave Mr. Clewes to understand that he could do the same thing, but he did not seem to take the hint. He was so handsome, gentlemanly, and considerate, that it vexed me that Blossom would not make friends with him. The dog did not, as in Martha's case, show mere tolerance; he absolutely growled, looked dangerous, and showed his teeth, no matter how much I scolded.

"Never mind, Miss Stewart; he'll get used to me," he said, at first; but Blossom tried his best not to verify his words—to the very last he snapped and growled, and played the beligerent.

I had never given Mr. Clewes the glove, or sent it to him. I can hardly say why, except that I was a little bit provoked that I had made such a fuss over it; so, enjoining silence on Martha, I threw it into a box full of odds and ends, and let it lie there.

We often talked about the party, as the time drew near, and the invitations had all been answered favorably. We sometimes walked through the rooms, or lighted them at night, and fancied how it would look when the flowers were in their places and all was light and perfume.

"You ought to be the happiest girl in the world," Martha said, on the night of our last inspection; "you have all you can possibly want or wish for."

"That don't make happiness," I said, oracularly, not because I knew from experience particularly, but that I thought it the proper thing to say.



“To me, it would be supreme, transcendent! But it is almost always so—those who have wealth don’t value it, while those who long for it are denied.”

“Take my place to-morrow night,” I said, laughingly. “I hate crowds; introductions are simply abominable, and full dress almost insupportable for five or six tedious hours. I’d a great deal rather be out on the lawn with Blossom, in a loose and comfortable frock, counting the Chinese lanterns. That would be enjoyment!”

“Yes, but would you like my place—out among the servants? or, what is more likely, in the solitude of my own room?”

“No need of either,” said a voice near us; and there stood my father, who had overheard a part, possibly all, of our conversation. Martha started and blushed; I would have spoken, but my father turned and went out of the room. Martha, too, moved away shyly; but I detected a smile on her thin, bright lips, that sickened me. In the course of an hour, I received the following note:—

“DEAR DAUGHTER ADA:—

“I wish you to invite Miss Martha Voles to the entertainment given to-morrow evening in your honor. Miss Voles is a young lady of superior training and attainments; and I do not think it will reflect upon you to receive her as a guest. This, at any rate, is my desire, as I wish to make everybody under my roof happy for once. *Your father,*

“F. STEWART.”

I pondered long over this written command, for command I felt it to be. It did not, after all, seem so incongruous when I reflected, that Martha Voles



was a lady in appearance, and to some extent characteristic; but why should my father interest himself about her? He had seen her so seldom, I thought, he surely could not know much as to her good or bad qualities. And I was obliged to invite her! Could I do it with a good grace? She was my maid; yes, but she was also cultivated enough to be, in a sense, my companion. I was not so silly as to look down upon her simply because she took care of my room, my ribbons and laces; and yet the duty irritated me. With the best grace I could, I informed her that I should expect her to come down in full dress; but she declined until some way she wormed it out of me, that my father wished it. Then she was all smiles and compliance, and, in that mood, exceedingly hateful to me.

Cousin Philip was not only annoyed, but exasperated.

“I should certainly remonstrate with your father if he was in his sane mind,” he said; “but what can one do with a madman?”

“You do not think my father is mad?” I said.

“I do think him a madman, and not harmless, either, if he is capable of this freak. Let me ask you,” he continued, “if Miss Voles is intimate with Mr. Clewes, your father’s new agent.”

“Not at all—at least, she professes not to be,” I replied;—“yes, I am sure of it; they met in this room yesterday, and never spoke, never even looked at each other.”

“Then there is hoodwinking somewhere,” he said;



“for I saw them talking together down by the arbor;—they did not see me;—and I plainly heard him ask her, laughing, if she had mended the lilac glove yet; and she replied, also laughing, that you had taken it into custody, and she had not been able to get it out of your possession.”

I looked at him in astonishment, and put both hands over my cheeks to cool their burning.

“Cousin Philip, did you hear that?” I asked.

“I certainly did; and they walked on, or I should have been obliged to hear more or reveal my vicinity.”

“That,” I cried, “is absolute and unqualified deception! How shall I inform my father? I will give the glove immediately to Martha Voles, and tell the agent how I came in possession of it. I will go right away.”

“Stop, child,” said Cousin Philip, gravely; “you are too heated; you are angry and trembling, and you have much before you to do. Leave the business in my hands; you can trust me. You know I have perfect consideration for you, and will find out the best way to get at the matter. Let things go on as they were going; you don’t want a scene and a break-up just now. See, there are some of your guests coming this early; and you must attend to their comfort. Can you not leave it all in my hands?”

I was only too willing to trust him, to throw all this new burden upon him; for indeed it required all my tact and strength to play the hostess on a larger scale than I had ever been called to do. Four or five



of our visitors, relatives of my father, came to tea ; and rooms had to be assigned to them, and their comfort looked after. Mrs. Davis was invaluable on such occasions ; and now she seemed unwontedly gracious, even “ my dear ” -ing me, to my great disgust ; for I could not divest myself of the idea that she was longing to do me an injury. But, amidst all my cares, like a heavy black shadow, at my back and at my foot, came the feeling that I was in some measure being betrayed in the house of my friends. I had never felt that there was any thing very incisive or energetic in my character ; but it seemed as if a new strength gathered about me as I felt that some danger was coming nearer and nearer, and that it would strike soon.

The evening came on like a glory. Within and without were alike a scene of enchantment. The lawn was full of people who had come merely to see the illumination ; and the rooms were reasonably filled with beautiful and well-dressed women and a full complement of gentlemen. I was here, there, and everywhere after the introductions were all accomplished ; and for a time the black shadow seemed to have vanished. I was made to feel, in many ways, that I was the queen of the *fete*—glad smiles and gay congratulations and bright laughter gratified all my highest aspirations. Fair, clear sparks of light came from scores of jets, glinting on creamy laces and exquisite toilets. Perfume filled the throbbing air : no hint of trouble or sorrow was there in all this lavish display. A sort of delirious joy came over me. Af-



ter all, what a glorious world it was! And, as Martha had said, there was power in money—power, delight! One could, at any time, with this golden wand, secure a happiness which was almost fabulous. Was this the “life beautiful”? By the way, I had not seen Martha yet. She had not dressed till after she had attended to me; and I wondered, with a woman’s curiosity, what she had on.

“O Miss Stewart,” cried an old lady, a really beautiful old lady, with her white hair and quiet dress, “your costume is quite exceptional. Allow me to compliment you. I have never seen any thing like it since I was at your mamma’s wedding; and that was over thirty years ago.”

“You see mamma’s wedding-dress now,” I said.

“What! is that possible?” and she scrutinized it closely. “I should have thought it would be past use by this time. What a lovely material! Ah! your poor papa; how he has aged! Really, I don’t wonder his mourning has extended through these three last years.”

“I haven’t been able to catch a glimpse of papa all this evening,” I said.

“Ah, well, the crowd, you know,—one has to be here, there, and everywhere as host; but he was here a moment ago, talking to a very pretty dark girl: I noticed her because her dress was very *recherché*, and she had such beautifully moulded arms. They went out of the room together, quite like lovers, I assure you.”

I felt myself growing pale; for, though my mam



ma's old friend gave her information with a merry little laugh, as though she only told it as a mere joke, an impression seized me that she had seen my father and Martha go out of the room together. Mechanically I made my way to an open window, and stood there under the pale moonlight, mingled with the more yellow reflection cast upon the atmosphere by the many illuminations. There were several couples walking about the grounds; and the murmur of voices laughing and talking came in subdued sound to the place where I stood.

Suddenly I saw them coming towards me, my father and Martha Voles, walking arm in arm. She was looking down and smiling, a train of light blue satin thrown over the unoccupied arm. How in the world had she managed to get a dress like that, I thought; and why should my father allow himself to walk with my maid. I stood shivering, looking at them, my mind distracted, my brain heavy with wonder, when, as they neared me, my father suddenly looked towards me. With an exclamation, he dropped Martha's arm, and gazed for a moment as if chained to the spot.

My heart throbbed madly for one little moment. In me, my father saw the likeness of my mother as she had appeared on her bridal day.

Quietly as I had come, I moved back, leaving him apparently transfixed, and mingled with the crowd indoors. Later on I sang, still later I attended the supper room with the rest; but I walked, sang, tasted, like one in a dream. My shadow was not now at my side or my foot; it had thrown its mystical folds all



over me, enveloping me as in a shroud. Oh, how I longed for the night to be gone ! How I longed to be with Martha Voles face to face ! And, at last, when the soft light had melted out with the crowds, and one by one I took the hands of friends and strangers, with a smile on my lip and polite words on my tongue, more than one let my icy fingers fall, as if the touch chilled them.

The last person I saw was Mrs. Davis, resplendent in a dress of black satin. She stood at the foot of the stairs, as if she had been waiting for me.

“How well you did it, my dear,” she exclaimed ; “one would think you had been house-mistress for twenty years instead of two or three. It did make me think so much of my poor dead Mrs. Stewart.”

I felt to the bottom of my heart, that her words and her manner were both hypocritical ; and, for the moment, I think I knew what the venom of hate was. I only looked at her, but did not answer, but ran rapidly up-stairs, trembling all over. Martha Voles was there, in her usual black Cashmere, the flowers all taken out of her hair, and all vestige of her finery hidden. It seemed like a myth, the *tableau* I had seen—jewels, satin, lace, and her beautiful dark face mocking me through all.

She came forward to assist me.

“Thank you,” I said, drawing myself proudly up ; “I can do without your help to-night.”

She only nodded her head, with that exasperating smile on her thin, scarlet lips, and went back to the table at which I had found her. How I tore off my



ornaments, to the destruction of almost every thing I touched, I never knew. I only know that I felt, now tremors of heat, now shivering cold, and that I trembled so that I could scarcely stand, and set my teeth hard against a disposition to faint. No, she should not see me that weak ; I was not going to fall at her feet. Once or twice, my fury—for I can call it nothing else—was on the point of bursting out ; but I had promised Cousin Philip that I would leave it all to him, and what I might say would perhaps only give her fresh weapons against me. One thing I could do and would—dismiss her as soon as her month was up (that would be in a very few days), giving her an extra month's wages. To think of this, consoled me somewhat.

Once more that night, when Martha had gone away, and I, ready for bed, heard the old familiar whine at my door (Blossom had been kept shut up during the evening), I crouched down at the fireplace, with my head in the dear old curly neck, and sobbed out my sorrow to Blossom.

“ O Blossom,” I said, “ the world is not a bit beautiful ; and it don't matter how much money you have, or how little care, things will go wrong, people won't love you when you want them to, and you're just as sick with the heartache as the poorest. O Blossom, you will never forsake me, will you ?”

And Blossom whined comfortably, the tip of his tail wagging as fast as it could, and his great, almost human, eyes fixed yearningly upon me.



## CHAPTER XV.

### A TIMELY INVITATION.

**A**T last the crisis came, as I knew it would. There were days and weeks of suspense, during which Martha put up with my freaks and my bad temper with unaccustomed patience. Mrs. Davis carried her head high, and would break out into mysterious smiles and nods and chuckles, my father was as reticent and distant as ever, Mr. Clewes as officious, and Cousin Philip as considerate, though he often appeared to be in a brown-study.

One day he came in, and threw his hat down on the parlor table. I was filling a vase with hot-house roses,—the fresh, sweet smell comes to me now, as I think of that morning. I was somewhat surprised, as Cousin Philip was neatness itself, and had always before left his hat on the rack. The expression of his face, as I looked up, made me spill some buds, and they fell on the floor. He stooped, and picked them up; and, in so doing, his hair came over his forehead. He looked that minute like a picture I had once seen of a man smitten with the palsy.

I could not speak for a little while, and then, summoning up all my strength, I said,—

“You might as well tell me, Cousin Philip.”

“Yes, I have unpleasant news for you, my child.” Just then the postman came, bringing some letters for



me. I flung them down on the table, turned away, and folded my hands hard.

“There, I’ll try to bear it,” I said, half childishly, half with a woman’s strong feeling.

“You will need all your fortitude,” was his reply. “Come and sit down.” I allowed him to lead me passively to the lounge; and there, for one sickening half-hour, I sat and listened.

How I spoke after that, how I lived, I can scarcely tell. I was so shocked that I remember I tried to think who I was and where I was. My lips were dry and parched; I could hardly move my tongue.

“And so my father will marry Martha Voles! She will be mistress of this house—and he don’t know who she is—and she is my maid—and a hypocrite—and a false wretch! and my father will marry her! Oh!” I cried, lifting myself up, “he will not so insult the memory of my mother! I will go to him. On my knees I will beg and pray, that, for her pure sake, —for my sake—”

Cousin Philip caught my hands.

“Indeed, you must not see him now,” he said. Listen to what concessions he has made. I laid the whole matter before him. It is unnecessary that I should enter into particulars. I pleaded as one who pleads for his life: I used every argument, even, that a skilled lawyer might employ; and he so far relented as to say that he would not precipitate the marriage, though it mattered little to him that she was homeless, and—he chose so to call her servitude—a dependent. On a further conversation, he said he had busi-



ness in Paris; and thus it stands. He has promised me, for your sake,—and he is a man of honor, though assuredly not quite sane,—to defer the marriage till his return.”

“And how long will he be gone?” I asked.

“Three or four months.”

“And she—Martha—has been some time secretly engaged to him?”

“Yes, so it seems.”

“And, O Cousin Philip! ought I—must I stay here with her? Never! I’ll go and earn my bread first,” I cried, despairingly.

“No, you certainly should not stay here; the torture would be too great. But to whom can you go, my child?”

“Oh, somebody will take pity on me!” I said, wearily. “My father virtually turns me out of doors—O Cousin Philip, how I hate—the world! every thing! everybody!” I cried, passion choking my voice, my very breath. “O Cousin Philip, she has known it this long time! How she has deceived me! She knew all along that she was to be one at my party—and that splendid blue satin—” I choked here, and quite broke down, sobbing hysterically. Cousin Philip half led, half carried me away from the open window to the end of the room, where, through the glass windows of a small conservatory, myriads of sweet blossoms shone amidst dripping waters.

It cut me to the very heart to feel that I had been made a tool of; and suddenly flashed over me the meaning of Mrs Davis’s changed, almost insolent, man-



ner. She, then, hardest of all to think,—she knew of my father what his own child would not dare to imagine.

Having seated me so that I could have my cry without interruption, my cousin walked back and forth in silence.

Presently he came towards me, a letter in his hand. His face was as pale as ashes.

“Cummingford!—whom do you know in Cummingford, my dear?” he asked, looking at me with his penetrating eyes, as if he would look me through.

“I don’t know anybody,” I half sobbed.

“You were not aware—you did not know that—your grandmother and your aunt lived in Cummingford—your mother’s mother and only sister?”

“No, indeed!” I looked up now. “No one ever told me where they lived. I supposed my grandmother was dead. I never liked her, never cared for her; she was cruel to my darling mother.”

“Very strange,” he murmured, and looked at the writing. It seemed as if he would devour it—held it back, drew it near. After the first paroxysm was over, I, still almost too wretched to move, took the letter, inspected the envelope, and opened it. Then I read, with a little cry of astonishment, as follows:—

“MISS ADELINE STEWART:—

“For the first time in my life, I address one who, though a perfect stranger, is very dear to me—my sister’s only child. Again and again I have tried to do this; but, under the pressure of strict commands, I have forborne to do so. Now I am released from these irksome restraints. I am not only allowed to write to you, but, in my mother’s language, ask you to come and spend a good long time with



us at Ruby Hall. You will find here two young ladies of your own age and your cousins, the daughters of your uncles Harry and William. You cannot tell how I hail this harbinger of restoration and good will. It is terrible to live under a ban, even if it be that of the merely human decision of a weak human creature. Shall I say to my mother, that you will come? We have not much to offer in the way of amusements; but Ruby Hall is a dear old house, and we have splendid mountain scenery. I promise you to do my best to entertain you, though the claims of an invalid mother may call me from you oftener than I could wish. But your cousins are merry girls, and talk of you from morning till night. Will you not come, my dear, and brighten a lonely home? I do so long to see my sister's darling!

*Your affectionate aunt,*

“ GENEVIEVE NORMANDY.”

I looked up at Cousin Philip. He was still startlingly pale, and there was a drawn look about his mouth I had never seen before. Could it be that he suffered so for my sake? You see, sorrow had made me so selfish I could only think of self; I had forgotten every thing but this one dominant fact. I had not yet learned that the true nobility of nature is that which displays itself in unselfish sacrifice, made with only a regard for the good it accomplishes, not for the reward it will create.

“ Well,” he said, and wiped his forehead, on which some moisture stood, though it was by no means a warm day, “ this seems like a direct interposition of providence. How very wonderful !”

“ But I don't want to go there, Cousin Philip,” I said. “ This aunt of mine and those cousins may be all very sweet; but my grandmother, she who exiled her own child, I cannot bear to think of meeting her. See what an exquisite hand she writes.”

He took the letter, and gazed and gazed as if devour-



ing its contents ; and yet he read not a word. Then, leaning his elbow on the end of the sofa, he sat thinking, the letter now and then, which he still read, brushing his lips.

“Do you know Grandmamma Normandy ?” I asked.

He nodded, then spoke in a husky voice—“I have seen her.”

“And isn’t she simply awful ?”

“By no means,” he said, with a smile. “In her day, she was one of the greatest belles in New England. The papers of sixty years ago rang her praises in every key. Then she comes of a very old family—traces her pedigree back to kings and queens, as the saying is ; and she is painfully proud of her blue blood. When your father won your mother’s heart, he was comparatively a poor man ; and poverty and mediocrity she hated. However, we won’t go back to those old days ; they are long over and past. I think if your angel mother could speak to you now, from the home to which she has gone, she would say, ‘Be reconciled.’”

“O but, Cousin Philip—to go among strangers ! to be driven from home ! I think I had much rather die.”

“You don’t know what you are saying, my child. You are very young, and have known but few trials heretofore. You will sometime experience, I trust, how exceedingly beautiful it is to be able to bear prosperity and adversity alike,—the substance of the world, full of sweetness ; and its shadow, full of blight,—the sweet and the bitter side of life ever



against each other. And, more than this," he said, in a softer voice, "it is Jesus, believed in as the Son of God, that overcomes, not only the world, but all the miserable cares and sordid sorrows of every-day life. Try, and see if you can't go to Him. Take your troubles there; you have heard how He invites you."

"I don't know any thing about Jesus," I said, almost angrily, and turning away. "God is not good to me; He has made me miserable; I don't want to go to Him."

How I must have stung that gentle heart, trying to forget his own griefs in ministering to mine.

"O Cousin Philip, forgive me," I cried, looking up through my blinding tears; "I am so utterly miserable!"

"Never mind, my child; I see how wretched you are. May God in His own good time give you comfort! The artificial, for the present, has supplanted the divine: try to see something beyond."

"I don't care to try," I made answer; "I don't want to think; I wish I could forget every thing;" and then I sprang up, such a feeling of vindictive resentment firing my veins that the blood seemed to sear my very heart, as if it were red hot.

"I must go up-stairs," I said. "Good-bye, Cousin Philip; I'll think over going to Cummingford. I dare say I shall have to go. But, in the meantime,—"  
and I pressed my lips together.

"Do nothing rash, my child; remember God has said, 'Vengeance is mine.'"



## CHAPTER XVI.

### A BATTLE WITH THE POWERS OF DARKNESS.

I WAITED till Cousin Philip disappeared; and then, striving to hide all traces of my tears, I went up-stairs slowly, thinking fiercely and bitterly all the way. I felt so pale, that it seemed to me my body ached as in a chill. I wished to be pale, to be furious, to be any thing that would be like an avenger. I never paused for a moment, but went straight into my room. Martha must have suspected something; for she half rose, half turned, as if undecided whether to go or stay. Oh, how I hated her! If I could have been a demon at that moment, in order to have the power to punish her, I would cheerfully have undergone the transformation. I suppose it was the feeling with which one exclaims, "Evil, be thou my good!"

"Martha Voles," I said, going straight up to her, and still moving as she receded till it seemed as if her eyes were almost set in mine, "you are a wicked, dangerous, deceitful woman! You are not a girl; there is nothing innocent about you: you are deep and designing and treacherous. Do you know that I have a great mind to kill you? and that I could kill you?"

"Good heavens! Miss Ada," was all she could say, only she grew white to her lips, and held out her hands in deadly terror.



“No wonder you shake and shiver,” I went on, my voice thick with rage. “You have been mean and cowardly ; you have plotted to turn me out of my home ; you have done it, virtually, for I am going away : but, while I remain here, find yourself another room in another part of the house. Mrs. Davis will help you ; *there is more between you two than shows on the surface.* Go ! take every thing that belongs to you, and never darken this door again. If you meet me, don’t speak to me ;” and I towered, in my anger, even above her.

“I’m sure, if your father, Miss Ada—” but I cut her short, even as she began. I made her cower in mortal fear. She hurriedly gathered up a bundle, and, without saying another word, left the room.

Then began my struggle with myself. I walked the room like a tigress lashed by despair. I hated Martha Voles ; but, at the same time, I hated myself. I knew enough of the better life to feel that all good angels had departed from me, driven away by my own mad violence. Hatred was in my heart—aye, murder. It was an ugly word ; but I knew the thing for which it stood, mocking and grinning and scourging, was at the moment in my heart. If he who hated his brother was a murderer, was I not doubly one in intent ? My own violent passions frightened me. I had been wont to contemplate my character as peculiarly free from the common blemishes of nature. I felt that I could forgive great crimes, until the time came in which I was tried. I had flattered myself that the equipoise of my mind could never be



disturbed, and had made up scenes in which I, the wronged, had forgiven with a wondrous magnanimity. But what a blank had fallen over it all! Here was I, none the happier because I had said my say and poured out the vials of my wrath. Yes, I had been wronged, outraged, deceived; but, somehow, nothing I could do or think soothed the raging of my passions. I wandered down the stairs, like an uneasy animal that finds itself amidst strange surroundings. Bridget was just leaving the front door, having been about some work there. The moment she saw me she threw her great check apron all over her face, and ran down the hall.

“Bridget, don’t go,” I called; “come here.” I made her take her apron down.

“Did you know it?” I asked.

“Know it! hain’t I seen it iver since she’s been here? Know it! isn’t the green of her eye enough for you?” and then she went into denunciation so violent that I had to stop her.

“Why didn’t you tell me, Bridget?” I asked, as gently as I could.

“Sure, you poor innocent, how would I take a hammer, and shiver the fine white statue yonder into bits? Do you think Bridget could ‘a’ made the first blow agin your heart, and I knowing how ye loved the mother of ye?”

Now, as ever, homely Irish Bridget gave me some comfort; but, as I went into the long parlor, which had not yet lost its festive character, the horrible evil leered at me again, and once more I seemed given over to the dominion of wicked spirits.



“Oh, I want help, I want help!” I cried, in an agony of sorrow, terror, and remorse. “Lord, why don’t you hear me? I want help!”

“And you shall have help,” said a firm, sweet voice.

I looked up, with almost a cry of terror, and at the same moment caught a glimpse of myself in the long mirror leaning from the wall. My tear-stained face, dishevelled hair, and wild countenance repulsed my beauty-loving senses. I tried to hide myself, but could not; for there in the doorway stood Doctor Henry, a world of sympathy in his dark eyes.

A grand man he was, handsome with the magnetic beauty of goodness, great with the impress of a divine nature, gentle and royal together,—a man God-sent, God-loving, aye, even God-like.

“You are tired and almost ill,” he said, coming gently forward and leading me to a seat. It was at the side of a rarely carved table, in a satin easy-chair, that was like thorns to me now. He himself brought another chair, so that he sat facing me. It was very still outside; for Cousin Philip had taken Blossom with him, and within doors we were not liable to be disturbed, either by inmates or visitors, as all my party calls had been received.

“Now, come, let us reason together,” he said, with unwonted sweetness. “The Lord has sent me to comfort you. That’s a way He has. He lets the bruised spirit suffer until it feels its need of Him, and then He speaks.”

“I don’t know any thing about Him,” I said, des-



perately. "I wish I did ; but I don't understand, and I can't believe, so that one minute I call on God, and the next don't know whether there is a God. O Doctor Henry, I am so wretched !" I looked pitifully towards him. He seemed so helpful ; his great brown eyes were fairly luminous with spirituality ; he looked so strong, so sweet, that I caught myself thinking that Christ must have been such a one in bodily appearance.

"I see you want to be convinced," he said.

"Yes, thoroughly, beyond doubt. I want to know just what Christ is, just what He did, how I am to believe in Him. I am in sorrow and in trouble ; but I can't bear to feel—I might as well say it—wicked to fiendishness. It isn't like me ; I never did before. I have always loved everybody ; I have been hopeful and happy and gentle : but it seems as if every thing good is crushed out of me ; I can only liken it to a whirlwind of darkness. It frightens me. If there is any help for me—"

He answered my wistful look with a smile.

"Well, my child, you have learned this much, that Christ was a promised Savior," he said, his fine face beginning to glow.

"Yes, sir ; I know the Jews expected Him."

"Yes ; and how he was born in the manger, and grew up among his own. His perfect manhood did not commence in Heaven, but here on earth. His human nature was the same in essence as our own. He was a splendid specimen of unblemished humanity. He lived on this earth. He was seen and known



of Apostles and Disciples, also Jews and enemies. Angels talked with Him. He raised the dead. And yet He was an outcast."

"They did not believe Him, then," I said, "though they saw Him?"

"The question implies your own doubt, my child. They did not believe in Him simply because He came among them poor and lowly. What human purpose made Christ an outcast? Was it the craving of ambition to rise into the realm of power? If empire was His object, His history shows how readily He might have gained His wish. Was it the ostentatious popularity of a singular being? Surely, His preaching thwarted the very possibility of such an odium. Was it the vindication of persecuted rights? Not so; for His loyal obedience to the powers that were gave Him the advantage of His brethren. Now, you see, Miss Ada, I am talking to you just as if you were a man? Shall I go on?"

"Yes, yes," I cried. "If you only knew how hungry I am for this knowledge, and what a dreadful unbeliever I have been!"

"Very well, then. There was too much tenderness in His manner to mark Him as a warrior, too much self-abnegation and humility to brand him as a pretending enthusiast, too much frankness of behavior to cast Him forth as a stirrer-up of sedition.

"Then, as now,—but much more marked,—the spiritual element in man's nature was sleeping. Religion was a form, not a living fire. The body of truth was enervated; it lay as a corpse in the temple



of Jew and Pagan. Light and warmth were wanted. A living power was needed to impart vigor to the decaying frame. A prostrate morality famished for an impulse to rouse it into action. Christ came ; He was the Morning Star ! Nature awakened first in the bosom of the angry Herod. Then followed a cloud of blood, and the land was wailing for the innocents. Presently, Christ came teaching. Men waked to see a new day dawning. Who was this Jesus, practicing purity ? Why, He was too good for His age—altogether too good, they said. He was wonderful, brilliant, thrilling. No single living orator had ever spoken such burning words. Look at Him : there is a halo around his head. Look at Him, my child : He is an actual presence. The shafts of truth that fly from His lips detect them in their frauds.

“ ‘ Why, He sees my very thoughts ! ’ cries one.

“ ‘ How did He know that I was a hypocrite ? ’ mutters another. And one sweet, tender woman whispers, ‘ How did He know that I laid my little dead baby in the graveyard over there in Galilee ? ’

“ Do you watch Him as He speaks, my child ? His countenance is like a flame. Everybody is troubled and asking questions about this mighty man.”

He paused ; and, looking forward, his beautiful face grew almost seraphic. The silence seemed holy. Drawing a long breath, he smiled as if he had seen something more than mortal.

“ Are you getting tired ? ” he asked.

“ No, no : if all this concerns my very salvation, how can I be tired ? ” I replied.



“Right. I like people to reason out these things. Feeling is good, faith is glorious; but the mind that reasons out its faith, and then can give a reason *for* its faith, that mind give me.

“The intensity of Christ’s glory rose as He went on,—as the sun lifts from the mountain’s misty summit, and glows on till it reaches the meridian, and then burns an hour on the resting world. The intensity of the Savior’s glory kindled the flames of a grand passion in human breasts. The fortress of the kingdom of darkness had been assailed, and men laid hold on Jesus as their only salvation. This was His purpose then, my dear child,—to rouse the world into moral sensibility,—to chafe the palsied limbs, and set the blood of life astir in minds that had grown numb with the frosty chill of insincerity and sin. And this great, this wonderful, this kingly man, humbled himself and became obedient unto death,—yea, even the death of the cross.

“I cite no fiction in this,” he added, his fine eyes kindling; “I attempt to prove no theory; I assert a fact. Jesus Christ died that you and I, seeing His perfect life and perfect obedience, might, by following in his footsteps, become Christ-like. My dear, He forgave those dreadful Jews who tortured Him when He was dying.”

“And I find it so hard to forgive, I can’t,” I said, chokingly.

“Imitate Christ then. Go to Him, and ask Him to teach you how to forgive.”

“I wish I could believe, or else that I didn’t care about it,” I murmured.



“Yes, that’s what most say,” he answered,—“Infidels and Atheists.”

“O Doctor Henry,” I cried, “don’t class me with them.”

“Then whom shall I class you with?”

My head fell on my hands. His question opened my eyes; I was either on one side or the other, and I was not, in thought, word, or deed, a Christian. I knew that; the morning’s experience had revealed it to me. I had looked into my own nature; and it was a yawning sepulchre, full of corruption. For one brief hour, unholiness had revelled there, like a nest of unclean things, to show me what I was.

“I don’t want to be unchristian, unbelieving, and wicked,” I murmured, my face still hidden.

“Then you need not, shall not be. Materialism, with all its boasted systems and its proud, imperious champions, flourishes but as poisonous but brilliant weeds at the base of the enduring rock. The rock stands, defying the snows and the tempest; but the poisonous flowers die at its base, to flourish again and again perish at the feet of undying truth. I talk thus to you because I think I see the bent of your mind, and because I know that Satan is making a hard struggle for you.”



## CHAPTER XVII.

“**Y**OU know—what has brought this great trouble on me?” I said, timidly, raising my eyes to his face.

“Yes; I learned it from Mr. Philip, whom I met this morning.”

“I thought so; and he sent you here?”

“I should have come anyway; I had an errand here.”

“And don’t you—think—it is terrible?” I half sobbed.

“I have known worse things,” he said, calmly. “I could tell you two or three little stories that would make you willing to thank God for the many mercies you have still left.”

“But all this long deception! and who knows who she is? And she is not truthful—or good—and—by-and-bye he will see it all.”

“Let us hope that he will see it in time. Believe that he will; ask God to open his eyes. God can do wonderful things,” he said.

“And would He hear me?”

“He has been hearing you all your life. He heard you through your mother’s entreaties;—for she was a saint;—now He will hear you for your own. Try Him: go humbly but fearlessly,—I was going to say as you would go to your father; but, my child, He is infinitely more tender than the wisest, most loving father can be.”



“I will try,” was in my heart and on my tongue ; but the perversity of human nature was still strong.

“Is not Professor Singard a great man ?” I asked.

“Undoubtedly ; one of the finest scholars of modern times—great as to intellect,” said Doctor Henry, with a smile.

“I heard him say to a gentleman the other night, at my party, that Christianity had got to be stamped out.”

“Well, yes. Nero said just that same thing,” said Doctor Henry. “He tried to stamp the life of apostolic zeal under his cruel foot, and to burn it out with the bodies of men, women, and children ; but where is Nero to-day ? And yet Nero thought to crush Christianity. The Roman empire in those early days, instigated by unholy priests and proud philosophers, persecuted the Christians in every reign. What is Rome now ? Rotten to the core with the decay of centuries. Even its ecclesiastical greatness is no more ; and the very blood that drenched the imperial city is beginning to bear fruit, at this late day, for the pure Gospel of the cross.” He stood erect, throwing back his noble head ; and the beauty and solemnity of his closing words thrilled me.

“As well might man put out his hands to bar the progress of eternal truth, as for all earth’s powers combined to force aside the on-marching millions of the redeemed ! The humble man of the crucifixion has become the mighty God of the Resurrection ; and the world that mocked Him at the cross is turning every hour to recognize Him in worship on His heavenly throne.



“It is the *true* manhood, the *true* womanhood, that dares to embrace the truth. Child, your Savior died for you, your Savior is waiting for you: chose this day whom ye will serve, Christ or Mammon.”

“I want to serve Christ,” I said, rising also; “what shall I do? I want to lead the ‘life beautiful’ my mother lived.”

“What would you do if your mother were alive and wished you to perform some simple duty?”

“Oh, how gladly would I obey!” I said, with a sob.

“Then obey Christ; learn of Him, seek Him in all you do. *The smallest effort of the soul to accomplish this is the beginning of the work God has given you to do.*”

“And I must forgive—” I hesitated.

“Certainly, you must forgive if you wish to be forgiven.”

“And,” I faltered, “I must make no effort to prevent this—this dreadful evil? for, oh! it is an evil. I must see every thing going wrong, and never lift my hands—”

“Lift them often, aye, unweariedly, in prayer,” he said, gently, the tears in his own eyes. “I do not counsel you to be an automaton, a wooden doll with a few joints, a passive figurehead, a spiritless worm. No, no! use every honorable effort to prevent what seems to you a wrong; but don’t do it in the spirit of malice or revenge. It is well sometimes to pity where we cannot understand. This woman may be unhappily organized—all her associations in early



youth may have been evil ones. She has been taught, evidently by a hard experience, that riches are the chief good, and to turn all her arts and accomplishments to use in that direction. Come, come, cheer up. First try to have faith in God, and the rest will follow. In some way, and that the very best, if you have full trust in Him, He will help and deliver you. Put it all in His hands ; throw the burden upon Him ; be His child and faithful soldier from this time henceforth, amen."

This he said with his hands upon my bowed head ; and it seemed as if comfort came with the words. The wicked hate and unholy unrest had gone, and left me quiet and subdued in spirit. I went up the stairs into my own room, trying hard to pity the discarded Martha. I could not recall her ; that would have been hypocrisy on my part, for as yet I did not want her near me. I was anxious now to leave the house ; and, though I dreaded the necessity, yet I must seek out my father and tell him my decision.

But here a blank horror fell upon me. How should I tell him my reasons ? how touch that one subject without offending him ?

"Put it all in His hands ; throw the burden upon Him !" rang in my ears.

I did it, in my feeble way ; but I did it. I took the first step forward in the progress of a true Christian experience. God be thanked ! I was able to begin right.

My father met me almost affectionately. Yes, he even kissed me, though the kiss seemed cold.



“You looked like your mother, child, that night,” he said, with some emotion. That choked me. It was some time before I could speak. Might I not plead with him? Three times I opened my lips to speak, and three times my heart failed me.

“I have come to ask you, sir,” I said, at last, “to allow me to visit my grandmother. Here is the letter my Aunt Genevieve sent me.”

He looked at me, his dark, hollow eyes burning as he took the letter. Dear, dear father! in spite of the wrong he had done me, my heart positively ached with the love I felt for him. To be folded in his arms, to weep one moment on his bosom, I would willingly have sacrificed years of my life.

“You wish to go?” at last he said, uneasily.

“Yes, sir; it would be very lonely here—at least—I learned that you were going to Paris; and, during the months you are gone, I—should like to be away.”

“It is very natural,” he said, in his low, clear tones. “I am not sure that you will be any happier though. Mrs. Normandy, your grandmother, is a cold, peculiar woman. I would not send my worst enemy there. It may be, however, as she draws near the close of life, she is growing more human. You wish, then, to go?”

“Very much indeed,” I faltered.

“You are not happy here?”

“No, sir, I am not happy here just now,” I said, chokingly. Would he speak of Martha Voles? I think I prayed, almost unconsciously, that he might not. Resentment was gathering hot within me.



“I shall be gone three months. I presume your Cousin Philip told you—about—it.”

“Yes, sir ; that is why I wish to go.”

“Naturally,” he murmured, musingly. A wild thought came to me ; it gave me a fever so that my very breath grew like fire.

“Papa,” I said, standing up,—and he must have seen something strange in my face ; for he half rose, while the smouldering light in his eyes quickened,—“my mother stands close by your side, and prays you not to do this wicked thing.”

Then, seeing the horror in his face, the tremor of his frame, I rushed from the room, more dead than alive, and fell exhausted upon the couch in my own bedroom.

When I came to consciousness, I had been ill for a week, so ill that, at times, my life had been despaired of. Faithful Bridget came up one evening, at my request, and told me all about it.

“Indade, Miss Ada, whin ye didn’t come to dinner nor yet to supper, the folks grew worried, and I was sent up. It’s just in a roarin’ fever ye was, wid the eyes so bright they frightened the life out o’ me ; an’ all ye could do was to talk of the dead mistress, God bless her ! And so yer fayther come ; an’ the doc-ther was sent for ; and the masther he walked the floor down below, an’ wrunged his hands ; and yer Cousin Philip he coomed over ; and a nurse was got ; an’ I tell ye it was a sad household.”

“So my father did care ?” I said, faintly.

“Care ! it’s meself thought the man ’u’d go crazy



poor soul ! Not that I wonther at it. I've seen him hang over ye wid the old look in his swate dark eyes, an' his voice that shaky whin he did spake, that it sounded jist like an old woman's crooning. I'd wager the love that wint out at yer mother's grave, the swate lady, was kindled agen whin he seed you so helpless and maybe dyin'."

"Oh, thank God for that !"

"Ye may well say it," said Bridget, wiping the tears from my lashes ; for I was yet too weak to lift my hands. "Well say it ye may, honey. It's me solid opinion he's jist sorry for the coorse things is taken, and 'u'd be glad to be out of it."

"O Bridget, you don't think that !"

"I jist do, wid every inch of me body and soul."

"Did Doctor Henry come here ?"

"He jist called ; an' a good man he is. But he wouldn't come up. How he's iver lived till thirty, my dear, wid that face of his, and not took no lady to wife, I can't imagine."

"And—and Martha ?" I asked, more than anxious.

"Oh, she couldn't stand it, my child, and so she went to the city to some friend of Mrs. Davis's ; and she'll not be back agen while you're in the house, the hussy !"

"Perhaps she never'll come back, Bridget."

"Don't ye believe it, miss, dear. Mrs. Davis is still waters, and runs deep ; but I can see it in her eyes an' ketch it now and agin in her words, that Martha Voles intends to be mistress here."

I was glad she was gone, though I had learned to



pity her,—glad when the doctor said a change was absolutely necessary, and preparations were made to take me to Cummingford. My father came to see me often; and, though still undemonstrative, it was as though he had forgotten the language and bearing of affection. He talked very little; but it pained me to observe that his eyes had grown yet more hollow, and his face had gathered an anxious, unhappy expression that betokened restlessness of mind and body. Cousin Philip was to go with me for more than half the journey; but all my arguments did not convince him that he ought to see me to the very door.

“I shall put you in charge of somebody who will see you safely there,” he said; and then he always changed the subject. Presently I could sit up, walk about feebly, ride out, always with Blossom beside me. The dear, faithful creature had scarcely left my room from the first. I made all my visits, particularly to my poor and to little Polly Riddle, who had taken to her bed and was slowly wasting away.

Cousin Philip promised to write me one letter a week; and Bridget, who could write fairly well, declared, that, if I wouldn't make fun of the “spilling,” she'd let me know just how things went at the house.

It was all settled at last. The two big trunks securely fastened; the carriage at the door; my father waiting, strangely still, yet looking at me often; Bridget crying; Mrs. Davis officiously garrulous; and Blossom in a perfect fever of dog wonder at seeing all this commotion. Mr. Clewes, who was going



to drive us, stood respectfully by the carriage, ostensibly to help me in; but Cousin Philip almost elbowed him aside, and, taking me in his arms, put me on the back seat.

“Good-bye, my little girl,” said my father; “I have not forgotten.”

My heart leaped. What had he not forgotten? The wild words I said in my delirium on that eventful day perhaps.

How they kept Blossom back I never knew.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A HEARTY GREETING AT RUBY HALL.

**O**H, what a dreary, monotonous journey ! until I was put in an old-fashioned coach,—whose driver blew his horn every few minutes,—and told that I had only three miles more to go. The wonderful scenery had held my eyes captive till they ached. Vegetation was always lovely in our own woods ; but here, where the frost was heavier and the cold more decided, it was simply beautiful beyond description.

“Cousin Philip, I’m going to be terribly homesick,” I gasped, as I held on to his hand.

“You’re going to be as brave as a Trojan,” he said, laughing.

“Won’t you, at the very last moment, go to Ruby Hall ?”

“No ;” and his face paled a little. “I can’t go to Ruby Hall ; I have important business elsewhere.”

“And you’ll take care of Blossom ?” I asked, at a sign from the driver that he was ready to start.

“He shall be as the apple of my eye,” said Cousin Philip ; and I’ll write you about all his moods. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye !” with a great swelling sob, as I think of home, my father, Blossom, and Doctor Henry, all in a thought.



The team was whipped up; and presently the tavern, with its horses and loungers and rosy-cheeked boys and waiters in white aprons, and its many-twinkling windows, faded out of sight. Then came scenery that impressed and astonished me. Everywhere the mist-covered tops of hills shining in the sunlight, their splendid coloring fading into dull red; fields sloping to the river, all broken out with rye-stacks; and that splendid river! now sparkling in a billowy, white cascade, now blue as the eye of heaven. Here, there, and everywhere field and hillside, like great cradles of billowy gold, rocking and swaying between the hills.

And there was Ruby Hall. I knew it at once, standing just at the foot of one of those grand hills. It looked like an aristocrat that had held its position for ages; and every thing about it seemed to say, "I belong to the old house."

The porch of itself was a small habitation; and, just as the coach lumbered up to the old gate, I saw a small figure in the open doorway, and a lank, uncouth Irishman,—to whom, for Bridget's sake, my heart warmed immediately,—coming down to help in with the trunks.

"My darling, my sweet girl! So this in Ada's daughter?"

It might have been weakness, it might have been love at first sight, that made me hide my face in her neck, while her arms enclosed me and hugged me tightly, just as a mother's would.

I was not yet well, and the long journey had fa-



tigued me ; but I just rested in that one moment of ungrudged love as I had not rested for years. When I looked up, I saw a slight figure in whose sweet face I could trace a strong resemblance to my dead mother, with shining, tender eyes, and a mouth that was the very embodiment of grace and beauty.

“This is a lonely old house,” she said, hovering about me, taking my cloak, my hat, and leading me to a large room that led up five steps from the hall ; “but we must all try and make it as pleasant for you as we can. I have to stay a great part of the time with mother ; but Bessy and Nancy will always be ready to add to your comfort. You won’t be very lonely with madcap Bessy.”

“I shall hardly know how to act, I have been so much alone all my life,” I said. It was a comfortable room, albeit very large ; but I was used to space. A bright wood fire burned on the hearth : there were wood fires in all the habitable rooms, she told me, though the house was furnace heated.

“Girls !” cried Aunt Genevieve, as she led me back into the parlor.

“Well, aunty ;” and a winsome face, framed in golden hair, looked in, and then came hurrying forward.

“We were making believe we didn’t know ; but then we did, you know,” she said, kissing me. “This is my Cousin Nancy. She’s prim and grave and careful, while I’m blunt and careless ; you’ll like her, but you’ll adore me.”

I laughed heartily at this little sally, there was so



much *bonhomie* about it ; and she did look like a little blossom, made to be loved.

Nancy greeted me just as affectionately, though with less effusiveness. Nancy was stately, though not very tall. She had the dark Normandy eyes and beautiful features.

Pretty soon, Bessy informed me, in an ominous whisper, that the house was haunted, that Grandy Normandy was positively frightful and Aunt Genevieve the nearest approach to an angel I should ever see in this world, and that Nancy was dreadfully religious,—at which, for it was all intended to be overheard, Nancy smiled over on me brightly.

“ You see we must spend our evenings alone ; and we don’t often have company now the farmers are so busy. Nancy, dear, I think I should be more comfortable without candles, the firelight is so strong. I’m awfully tired of this old castle. But, then, as Nancy says, we shall be all the better prepared for the festivities of the season, for which I’m going to pray devoutly to be furnished with a sky-blue silk trimmed with Maltese lace. Are you very fond of dress ?” she queried, leaning out from the depths of a much worn red silk armchair.

“ Well, I certainly like to be dressed well,” I said, taken aback by the suddenness of the question ; “ but perhaps I don’t care so much as some.”

“ You don’t ! Well, I idolize fine clothes ; I love them and they love me : don’t they, Nancy ? There’s Nancy there, she don’t care ; she don’t even care for the beaus. Do you ?”



"I certainly do not," I laughed back; "I have very few gentlemen friends, and all of them are quite old."

"Hear the child!" cried Bessy; "she knows nothing about our Yankee customs. Well, you will have a chance to see at least one of our adorers; he comes almost every evening. He is by no means an Adonis,—his face is one freckle, and his eyes seem all the time trying to jump over the bridge of his nose. To see him on that magnificent gray horse makes one envious. If I only owned that horse, the rider might go."

"Don't make fun of him, dear; he's honest," said Nancy.

"Don't ask impossible things of me, Nan. Any thing in reason; but I should laugh at poor Seth if I was dying," rattled the merry girl. "By the way, don't you want to be introduced to your ancestors?"

Snatching one of the candles which Nancy had not put out, she took me by the hand.

"There, my dear cousin," she said; "look at your grandmother by three removes. What a beauty she was!" and she held the light against cheeks of carnation and rich, red lips, eyes of soft brown that must have danced merrily once under the clusters of golden locks falling low over the forehead, much in the present fashion, primly kept in position by meshes of lace and bows of bright ribbon.

"Observe the art of dressmaking in those days," rattled my merry companion. "That rich white satin body is scarcely two inches long under the



arms. Wide sashes and leg-o'-mutton sleeves—how we should laugh at them now! Pretty though, rather. Don't they all look as if they were duchesses at the very least? Now doesn't it make you feel rather queer to think that she once lived in this very house, walked where we have walked, stood where we are standing, sang, danced?—if those tyrannical old Normandies ever allowed such vanities. And then think how many long, long years she has been dust and ashes! There's an old man in my father's shop, who says queer things. One day he looked up from a big package he was rolling along, his whitey gray eyes shining under a peaked visor. 'Miss Bessy,' said he, 'the worst thing is we've all got to die.' That was all; and on he trundled with his great roll. Let's go back to the fire; I'm positively shivering."

A solemn knock at the door, and the Irishman's face appeared.

"We call him 'Oriole,' because he's got red hair," whispered Bessy.

"Sure it's Mr. Smith Widdyson," said the man, on a broad grin, throwing the door wide.

"It isn't Smith; he's got the name wrong, you know: and it isn't Widdyson; it's Withinstone. He always gets it wrong."

"O never mind, Mr. Withinstone," said Nancy, coming to the rescue of the awkward youth; "Pat is always a blunderer, you know."

"Thank you,—yes,—how are you, ladies?" and he glanced vaguely at me, as if uncertain whether I came under that category. "Thank you,—yes, I'm



pretty well, thank you," turning his lack-lustre eyes on Bessy.

"You are all pretty well, I hope," he repeated, pushing the chair offered him so far away that he nearly fell down as he attempted to seat himself.

"Yes, we are all well, though Bessy has a cold. Mr. Withinstone, Miss Stewart, our new cousin."

I saw Bessy pinch herself as he got up and came forward to shake hands, and then nearly came to the floor again in his attempt to sit down.

"Father sold the ten-acre lot to-day," said the young man, smiling all round,—“sold it for a hundred dollars an acre : fair price these times.”

"I should think it was," said Nancy.

"We've got a good deal of land," he continued, planting his heels firmly side by side. "Withinstone's is an old family."

"Even the horses have a pedigree, haven't they ?" asked Bessy.

The dull face lighted up. Bessy was the sun of his adoration ; Bessy had spoken to him.

"Thet's so : all born on the farm and direct descendants of the fust stock brought over by Deacon Dan'l Withinstone, who came from the old country with twelve sons."

"Twelve sons," said Nancy ; "why, that beats your five brothers, Bessy."

Seth turned upon Bessy like a sunflower.

"Great Jethro !" said he, stretching his feet, "you don't say there's five of 'em ! A fellow'd have to run a reg'lar gantlet, wouldn't he ?"



This was too much for the girls ; and Seth joined in the laugh, evidently impressed that he had made a decided hit, whereupon he was radiant.

“Do they heft more’n I do?” enquired Seth, anxiously.

“They are all giants,” said Bessy, as well as she could for laughing. Her eyes were so bright and her cheeks so red it was no wonder that half-witted Seth could not keep his eyes off of her.

“Well, I can tackle a man of my own size—but five of ’em!” and he looked at the floor reflectively.

“What do they do for a living?” at last he enquired.

“Oh, different things,” was the reply.

“Any of ’em farmers?”

“No ; they all belong to the city.”

“Then, by jingo ! I’ll bet they ain’t worth half as much as I am,” he said, his face lighting up. “I’m the squire’s only son, you know, and inherit the farm. There’s no tellin’ how much land there is. Father says I’ll be as rich as a lord. We feed three hundred and fifty pigs ! But, bless you, I don’t do any thing ; father is bound that I shall be a gentleman.”

“You like that, I suppose,” said Bessy, demurely.

“Yes ; I’m not a-going to work if I can help it. I like a good team, you know—blood horses, you see ; and if I could only get the young ladies to ride—” he looked imploringly at Bessy.

“Thank you, but Mrs. Normandy don’t want us to ride with young gentlemen,” said Nancy. “She is very set in her way.”



“O yes—she’s the duchess, they call her; everybody calls her the duchess, you know. Then ’tain’t ’cause you don’t want to go with me,” he added.

“I’m very fond of riding,” said Bessy, biting her lip.

“All right; that’s frank. But I’d like to see you on Black Jenny—oh, by the way, I’ve named my dorg, Bessy; she’s as pretty a pointer as you’d ever wish to look at. Well, good-morning, ladies; I should like to stay longer;” and he backed out of the door.

Before he had well gone, Bessy was on the floor, all in a heap, rocking to and fro till all her braids came down and her face was one crimson with the boisterousness of her laughter. “Isn’t he a character, Cousin Ada Stewart? I was so glad you laughed, because, when I feel wicked, I want somebody to keep me company.”



## CHAPTER XIX.

### NO TIME TO BE HOMESICK.

**T**HIS was certainly a new feature in my experience. I had had no time to look back, to feel homesick or sad. Bessy charmed me; I could not have told why, except that, in some way not to be described in words, she reminded me of Blossom. If Blossom could have talked, he would have rattled on just as she did, I fancied.

After the young man had gone, she settled down to some fancy-work, and we were silent for a time.

Suddenly, a door near by shut heavily, its long resounding clang moaning along the passages. Then came a terrible thump and rattle just outside the parlor, a fall, and a long scream.

"I told you the house was haunted," cried Bessy, as we all sprang to our feet, while Bessy, blue with terror, armed herself with the tongs and poker.

"There's no harm whichever done, young ladies. It's nothing but an accident."

A tall, lank woman with a Roman nose, a wide mouth, and three prim gray curls shading each side of a high, narrow forehead, stood on the threshold. In one hand, she held an ancient iron candelabrum containing three wax candles. Behind her came Pat, the "Oriole," whose Milesian features and irresistible grin banished all fear of immediate danger.



“Give me that cloth, Pat, and help pick up the dishes, if dishes any is left,” said the prim housekeeper. “No harm did, Miss Genevy,” she called back; and, going to the door, I saw Aunt Genevieve standing at the foot of the stairs in a gray niche brightened by a tiny candle halo.

“Now you, Sally,” continued the irate housekeeper, “the butter-dish, likewise the teapot, comes outen your wages. We was going to give you a little surprise, ladies—pick every inch of Chanay up; and I wish it was your head, stoopid,” she continued, alternately addressing the parlor and the hall. “It’s most always so when folks plan, I believe—Pat, help that critter with Chanay bits right under her nose, and she, like a silly sheep, nosing round for nothin’.”

Bessy was laughing, the poker still uplifted; for Sally and Pat, happening to stoop at the same time, came into collision, and it was Pat’s turn to go down. Briskly extricating himself, he rose, exclaiming,—

“Sure, it’s well buthered I am, if not well bred,” which pun elicited loud applause; and he disappeared, grinning as usual.

“Isn’t he impident?” queried the housekeeper, as she came forward into the yellow area of the firelight. “You see, I’d been thinkin’ as maybe ye wouldn’t like to come into the dining-room for your tea,—it do look pokery and dolesome,—so I was sending the tray in, with the table-cloth, when that unlucky hussy missed of a step, and down it all went.”

“Are there no more dishes, Mrs. Clute?” asked Nancy.



“Bless your heart, plenty : the dishes is bewilderin’. Besides them in the spare pantry, there’s loads up-stairs ; and fortunate it was the great black teapot I sent,—which is fifty cents out of that stoopid girl,—and not the keramary one you all set such store by ; so every thing can be reasonably misplaced again.”

“Please misplace it directly then,” said Bessy, cheerily. “We’ll have our tea-party after all. It’s real kind of you ; but, I assure you, my hair just stood up. I thought of ghosts and burglars and every horrid thing.”

“Ghosts there may be, but bugglars, never,” said Mrs. Clute, with great solemnity. “I don’t believe anybody would ever try to buggle with the property of a Normandy ; there’re held in too high an estimate. As to ghosts, everybody has their own opinions. Mine is decided.”

“O Mrs. Clute,” cried Bessy, with outstretched hands, “did you ever see a ghost ?”

“I have seed—what I *have* seed,” said Mrs. Clute, oracularly ; “and what I *hain’t* seed I don’t believe in. There is all sorts of opinions, like noses and eyes,” she added, after a moment of thought ; “you put your nose on my face, and my nose on Miss Nancy’s face ; and there you are, all in a muddle—not to say how eyes would change one.”

I was laughing at the idea of that Roman nose on Nancy’s delicate face, quite forgetting that I had ever had cause for trouble. It seemed to me that I had chanced upon a delightful old museum full of quaint spectacles and odd people.



‘ But, Mrs. Clute, do save me from despair. Answer me in plain English : *did* you ever see a ghost ? ’ cried Bessy, holding to her question.

“ Miss Bessy, lies is my abhorrence, and truth is hard to tell, sometimes ; therefore, don’t ask me no questions. I can only tell you, that, every day on the stroke of six, me and Pat goes the rounds, and there ain’t a winder nor a door that don’t git double locked ; for, after Pat locks it, I unlock it and turn the key agin to be dead sure. After them times, Miss Bessy, I’d rather not go brummaging ; ” and the shake of her head added emphasis to the assertion.

“ Then you won’t tell me ? ” said Bessy. “ Of course you won’t. You never saw a ghost in your life. Isn’t she a hateful specimen of New England obstinacy ? ” she continued, as the woman set her Sphinx lips together, and went out. “ What shall I do to get it out of her ? She could tell something, I know.”

Tea was brought in,—honey, butter, preserves, a great fair white loaf of bread, plum cake in slices, and sage cheese.

“ If there’s one thing I do like more than another, in the way of rights and privileges,” said Bessy, “ it is toasting bread. I shall never forget how I used to enjoy it in the army.”

“ In the army ! were you ever in the army ? ” I asked.

“ Certainly ; papa was lieutenant-colonel of the 7th Grays. Rub-a-dub, dub-a-dub—oh ! how I do



love the drum," she answered, flourishing the bread-knife dangerously. "Well, papa was wounded; and Aunt Edith and I set off—Aunt Edith is my only aunt on my mother's side—to take care of him. I never shall forget that journey. Great Jethro! as poor Seth says, what perils we did encounter. Over half-finished bridges, across rivers swollen by the mountain torrents; taking tea sometimes with a black slave, a score of charcoal pickaninnies swarming about us, then messing with officers on the cold, cold ground; sleeping in hospitals and ambulances;—but the story is quite too long."

"Tell me," I said, excitedly; "I was in Paris—a child."

"In Paris! You blessed creature! Do you *parlez-vous français*? I can talk French. I shall bore you to death about Paris, so prepare yourself.

"Well, you know it was five years ago—this is '70, isn't it? Yes. I was only fourteen, bless you, but as tall as I am now—and ever so much wiser. Papa's hospital was his own tent. He always declared that my coming saved his life. It was a weird, wild experience: I wouldn't have missed it for a fortune. What camp-fires we had! swarthy groups, all made blood red and bright by the flames. And hot! you couldn't sit very near, I can tell you. We cooked with great Gypsy tripods holding mighty iron pots. I suppose they were filched from some plantation. Can you imagine any thing more magnificent than the woods, lighted in great centres, with the darkness like a wall behind them; stars, like fountain sprays,



continually going up against this background ; sentries pacing far and near ?”

“ I never heard of any thing so grand,” said Nancy.

“ Grand ! why, the depths of those forests were as dense as the hiding-places of Robin Hood. The trees seemed like the ghosts of outlaws. It was so delightful to think the enemy might be hidden somewhere. You needn’t laugh : if there is any thing delicious in this world it’s that creeping feeling, that utterly indescribable rush of courage and cowardice together with which one in camp anticipates some sudden, hidden danger. I believe I should feel so if I heard a snake rattle. Imagine mighty arches of oaks and elms all alive with color from root to branch, made by the merry greenwood flames.

“ One of those great fires was my special toasting-place. My fork, a yard long, was made of the toughest hickory—and, oh ! what a handsome little soldier boy made it for me ! He’s dead !” with a sigh ; “ killed in the very next battle ; and I think of him every night before I go to sleep. That’s what makes me believe in ghosts. Hundreds and hundreds of loaves I’ve toasted and salted and buttered, if there was any butter to put on. If not—now don’t laugh, girls.”

“ What did you use ?” I asked.

“ Well, I called it ‘ drips ;’ it was bacon fat.”

“ Horrible !” said Nancy, with a shudder.

“ Not so bad, I can assure you, the way I fixed it. The butter was for the sick only. They used to call me the little doctor.”

“ I suppose they toasted you in return,” said Nancy.



“O no ; I didn’t know the meaning of toasts of that kind,” said Bessy ; “I was only fourteen. But they adopted me as ‘daughter of the regiment.’ I was very proud of that—am now. Why don’t they bring the tea ?”



## CHAPTER XX.

### ONE GIRL WELL TRAINED.

THE door opened again. First came Pat with fresh candles, then Sally, the maid-of-all-work, a New England rustic beauty, with cheeks like red winter apples. She brought the steaming tea and a plate of cold chicken.

“Now this is living,” said Bessy. “Even if we get snowed up, I suppose we shan’t starve, eh, Sally?”

“Starve, miss!” echoed Sally, with a care-free laugh; “whatever we shall do with the vittles as is cooked and the things as isn’t, I’m sure I don’t know. Mis’ Clute can’t git away with ’em, no more can Pat and me, though Pat do eat like a ravishing wild cree-ter; and I’m sure you young ladies doesn’t take enough to keep a bird alive. Miss Jenny and the old lady, they mostly lives on water gruel;” and Sally shook her head lugubriously.

“So it seems we are overstocked with food,” said Bessy, as she slipped a round of bread inside the toaster.

“Yes, indeed, in the matter of pies ’n’ things. There’s eighteen squashes, to say nothing of ten minces and appleses; and you can’t step your foot for cranberries. Then there’s chickens and hamses and turkeys hanging up everywhere. As for drumsticks, I can say in clear conscience I’m sick of ’em.



At home they was Sunday fixings ; here I eat 'em all day and dream of 'em all night. Give me pigs' feet and salt fish for a relish, with pork and beans now and then."

"Sally," said Bessy, turning to get another slice, "do you know you are very loquacious?"

"Lo what?" asked Sally, with open mouth, struck by the magnitude of the word and startled at Bessy's solemn voice.

"Loquacious," repeated Bessy, making every syllable sonorous. "Your vo-cab-u-la-ry is immense, dreadful ; isn't it, girls?"

"Very," said Nancy, pouring out the tea into such dainty eggshells of cups.

"Laws ! miss, 'tain't no disease like janders or yeller fever is it?" asked Sally, her ruddy cheeks paling.

"No, Sally ; the simple English of it is that you talk too much," said Bessy.

"Oh !" and Sally drew a long breath. "I was reg'larly frightened, for I've been sort o' complaining for a week ; but seems to me I wouldn't want to be book larned if I had to use such awful words."

"Have you brought every thing in, Sally?" asked Nancy.

"Every thing, miss."

"Then you can go," said Bessy.

The girl laughed, colored, but left the room.

Then we drew up to the table. I admired the lovely China and the quaint silver.

"You should see the service in grandmother's room," said Nancy.



“Yes, three hundred years old, they say; but I don’t believe it. Grandmother Normandy don’t like me because of my Western training. I can’t help it. I had the best mother in the world, but I can’t help that either. Grandy thinks it’s a terrible thing because I learned to wash and cook and scrub. Now don’t you despise me, Cousin Ada Stewart, because I tell you frankly I do like to scrub. Just to get down on my knees, on a solid tow apron, and handle a brush, with plenty of soapsuds, on a nice smooth floor—well, it’s just delicious. Of course I can’t do it here, or anywhere now; but wait till I get a home of my own. I’ll have a room set aside on purpose to scrub when I have the humor.”

“You’re a crazy little Puck,” said Nancy, laughing.

“I’m a good strong healthy girl, and never know the luxury of a pain. I say luxury, because so many girls I know seem to enjoy crying their headaches and their backaches, and feel as if folks must like them better because they have some petted ache. It’s all humbug. There’s not one of us but had good hard-working ancestors, even aristocratic Grandmother Normandy herself. I say to be born with a silver spoon in one’s mouth is to be born healthy and happy; and it just makes me feel good to know, that, if any great misfortune should come, and papa should lose all his money, I shouldn’t be a hinderance to anybody. I’d just march out and show my diploma, certifying that I know every branch of housework from A to Z.”



“But where is your diploma?” asked Nancy.

“At home, hanging up, framed.”

“Have you really got one?” I asked.

“To be sure I have. All my five brothers had a hand in it. We’re a society at our house. Every one of my brothers knows how to sew on buttons—and other things. The name of our association is the ‘Royal P. A. D. N. Association.’”

“Well, if ever I heard the like!” exclaimed Nancy, with round eyes. “What in the name of wonder does all that mean?”

“It just means the ‘ROYAL PROGRESSIVE ANTI-DO-NOTHING ASSOCIATION.’ Mother is president, father is treasurer, and all the boys and myself are members. As soon as we have mastered a certain set of accomplishments, we get our diploma—a gorgeous thing, all drawn up beautifully in lovely colors, with scrolls and pictures—why, it’s a regular work of art! You see, all my brothers can paint.”

“Well, that certainly is a new chapter in my experience,” said Nancy.

“Entirely new to me,” I said. “Perhaps, if mamma had lived—” and then all my trouble seemed to rise in my throat and choke me.

“You haven’t seen grandy, of course,” said Bessy, hastening to change the subject, her eyes full of tears. I shook my head.

“Well, I don’t know what you will think of her. She’s our common grandmother; but there’s a difference of opinion—well, I mean she isn’t one of those sweet, pretty, chubby little grandmothers that every-



body loves and runs to kiss. She isn't what a grandmother ought to be. Still, she can be very gracious when in the mood. She was to-day, for instance. 'Enjoy yourselves, my dears,' she said, 'and ask anybody here you choose; I give you *carte blanche*.' For all that, I never go near her but what my spine stiffens, and I feel like saying, 'Your Royal Highness, may I or may I not?'

"To come down to hard pan, as we say out West," added Bessy, after this brilliant effort, "she's an awfully selfish old woman."

"Bessy!" said Nancy, with a look of reproach.

"Well, she is, and we all know it. Why not say so?"

"Because it's not good manners," said Nancy.

"Fiddlestick!" said Bessy, impetuously. "Nancy, I'll forgive you because I believe you're a Christian, and you do try to mend all my ragged places. You have your hands full, don't you, poor little girl? Someway, I can't eat," she added, a moment after. "It takes away my appetite to know there is so much cooked food in the house. Do hear the wind sighing in the chimney. Don't it seem almost like the voices of hungry, starving people? I wish they had all this toast. Just see what a pile there is untouched!"

"I don't think anybody is suffering round here," said Nancy. "Grandy is very good to the poor."

"Yes, to outsiders; but God pity her own poor!" said Bessy, almost passionately.

"Why, Bessy, what a mood you are in to-night!" said Nancy.



“Why don’t you add, ‘What will our new cousin think of you?’” asked Bessy, saucily. “Miss Ada,” she continued, turning to me, “I’m a most uncomfortable girl to have round, as you will find out: but I leave nothing to be guessed; I show all my wickedness. When I am converted,—as, please God, I hope to be sometime,—I shall be an out-and-out Christian. I was thinking, when I spoke as I did, of poor little Aunt Genevieve. I never look at her that she don’t remind me of a bird plucked of all its feathers, and trying to keep warm without them. It can’t be there’s no spirit in her, for I have seen her eyes flash more than once. What is the reason that grandy has had trouble with every one of her children?”

“Because she tried to make automatons of them,” said Nancy. “There’s a romance connected with Aunt Jenny’s history, you know.”

“Yes, poor thing! She’s just an angel to give up to that awful old woman. By the way, I’ve found an old letter—what did I do with it? Oh, it’s in my room. I ought to give it to Aunt Jenny, I suppose; but I don’t like to.”

“Not if you’ve read it,” said Nancy.

“You don’t think me capable of such a thing, do you, Nancy?” exclaimed Bessy, with quick emphasis. “Thank heaven! no; it would sink me very low in my own estimation. But I did look at the signature, and his name was Philip. Poor fellow! I’ve understood that he is never to come here while grandy lives, or at any rate till Aunt Jenny sends for him. I’m afraid that’s almost thirty years longer for her to wait;



and she's an old maid now, only there's nothing in the least of the old maid about her.

“Do you believe grandy ever cuddled her babies, or kissed their toes? Would you go to her in any sorrow? I can only think of pins and needles whenever I am near her. I wish Sally would come.”



## CHAPTER XXI.

### A VISIT FROM AUNT GENEVIEVE.

I HAD pinned my hair up and put on a dressing-sack that night, and then I looked round at the room that had been assigned me. It was splendid but somber. The massive wardrobes were marvels of carving; the chairs, of divers patterns, heavily trimmed with velvet; the curtains, sweeping the floor, of amber velvet: in fact, I felt that the grandest apartment in the house had been given to me because I was my father's daughter.

I had just taken in the solemnity and beauty of the room, when a tiny knock at the door set my nerves fluttering.

It was only Aunt Jenny, whose face seemed paler and more haggard, as if from some recent trial. She grasped my hand—hers was icy cold—and led me to a seat.

“My dear child,” she said, “I have not many minutes to stay; I only wanted to apologize—for—for mother.” Her lips trembled. “You have some enemy.”

“I—an enemy!” I cried, much pained. “Yes, perhaps Mrs. Davis; but what has my enemy been doing?”

“Some one wrote to my mother,—she received the letter to-day,—that your father had decided to marry



—the laundress—or some servant. You may imagine what effect the letter had on one with my mother's temperament."

I covered my burning face with my hand. Mrs. Davis had never written that. Who could it have been? To be an apologist for my father—had it come to this! Surely, I needed all my new-found Christian fortitude.

"Not the laundress," I said presently, "but to a young girl, very handsome, very intelligent, who was my maid."

"Some one unfortunately unable to earn a living any other way,—honorable and of family?" she said, smiling.

"O no, I'm afraid not; I don't know. Cousin Phil has always called her an adventuress. He never liked her; he warned me against keeping her. She had no recommendations; she appealed to my pity. I was so lonely, you see; and her face charmed me. That is all I can tell you. The news came to me so suddenly; and that was why I was glad you sent for me."

"Then your father will marry her?"

"I fear so. But he is going to Paris first; he promised me that when Cousin Philip talked to him. He will stay surely three months, perhaps six. I think he is sorry."

"That alters the case somewhat," she said, softly. "But what a pity that some meddler sent the news to mother! To marry such a woman—after my beautiful sister! you can imagine that mother would feel it."



"Yes," I said, sitting miserable, with clasped hands and downcast eyes.

"My poor little darling!" and she drew me to her bosom. "It is you who suffer most. It was that made you ill of course. You cannot tell how sorry I am for you. But never mind now; let us trust in God. Who knows what He may do before the time expires?"

"Are you a Christian?" I asked.

"I ought to be. If trouble ever drives a human soul to the feet of Jesus, we ought to bless God for the trial. If it wasn't for that, dear, I don't think I could have lived all these years. But I won't detain you, for you must be tired; only I—I—must apologize for mother. This news has shaken her so that she is quite ill; and—you know she may not be able to see you for some days. Will you mind?"

"She will be sorry I am here," I said, in sudden terror; "I had better go home."

"You will not go home; for you are *my* guest, my dear, and I shall be always at your service. Do you like your cousins? have you enjoyed the evening?"

"Very much," I said; "they are both such sweet girls. Cousin Philip used to say I ought to have more company of my own age."

"Cousin Philip seems to be a favorite," she said, with a quick little pressure of the hand and a sudden glow in both cheeks.

"Indeed, I am very fond of him; for he has seemed to take the place of my father—since mother's death;" and here I caught my breath. I had betrayed what



I had intended to keep a secret—my father's alienation.

"I suppose your father is quite absorbed in business," she said, simply.

"Very much; and Cousin Philip has no business: he reads and studies, and lectures for the poor people, and devotes his time to everybody who needs it."

"He is much older than you are," she said. Her hand had now got to my hair, which she pushed aside gently. I thought her fingers trembled.

"O dear, yes; but not old looking," I said. "Cousin Philip is a very handsome man; I know of but one handsomer, and that is Doctor Henry, our minister. You see, he was my mother's cousin by marriage; but he wished me always to call him Cousin Philip."

Her hand slipped down.

"He was your father's groomsman," she said, almost in a whisper.

"Did you know him?" I asked.

"I could hardly help having seen him—yes—I—knew him—years ago. Good-night, dear; don't let what I have said worry you; promise me that."

"I certainly will try not," I said.

"And mother will come round in time. You will wait, and not feel hurt?"

"Certainly."



## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE ROOM BEAUTIFUL.

THE door shut behind her, leaving me standing there looking at the fire, which was burning very low. At first, I thought of putting on some of the wood with which a box near by was plentifully filled; then came a rap at a door opposite that by which Aunt Genevieve had gone out. I brought all my courage to bear to answer this summons; for I was tired, homesick, and nervous. It startled me pleasantly to see Bessy's piquant face, framed in a fluff of hanging yellow hair, which the candle in her hand lighted up royally. She held the ends of a long shawl around her neck, under which a white dressing-sack gleamed conspicuously.

“I don't see why in the world they put you in this great gloomy room,” she said, looking round with a shiver. “So I told Nancy I would come down. It required no little courage, I can tell you, though Nan stood at the head of the stairs—and we mustn't keep her waiting. Come in our room; there's plenty of beds and a roaring fire, and no end of fun if you're not sleepy. If you are, we will be as still as nuns. Come, what do you say?”

For answer, I gathered up my belongings, and followed her through a long, dark hall, now stepping down, now stepping up, to the stairs, where the rays



of Nanny's beneficent candle shone "like a good deed;" and presently we were in the cosiest, brightest room, all white hangings and gold, with two immense bedsteads hung with the daintiest fabrics, pictures everywhere, and a splendid fire behind a fender four feet high.

"This room is our composition," said Bessy, dancing to the flame; "every bit of it save the four walls and the two bedsteads. It had been shut up for years, and the servants say it is haunted; but we have exorcised the ghosts, rummaged the house for furniture and hangings; and here we are. We call it the 'Room Beautiful.' Did you ever see such a fire? I bribe Sally with a heavy bribe to keep it burning all the time. Now, just be comfortable. You are not going to be a stranger, are you?"

"No, indeed," I said; and the name had set me to thinking of my mother and her desire that I should live the "life beautiful." I seemed to see how, like a room, the life could be swept, garnished, and glorified. "Yes, mother," I said to myself, "I will live the 'life beautiful.'"

It was a new pleasure to watch the pretty, white-robed girls flitting hither and thither; laughing; shaking unconfined tresses, that, curling and shining, floated around them; pausing now and then before their respective mirrors, all aglow with life, youth, and happiness;—to listen to their innocent jests and repartees, to note their comical little speeches, to feel the thrill of happy, careless, unreasoning merriment,—these brightened my own sad fancies.



I had made myself a promise to read a few verses in the Bible every night and morning, and had, for a week or two, kept up the practice regularly. Every girl knows that there are certain times when, in the beginning of a Christian experience, the tempter whispers, "Never mind now ; put it off awhile ; the surroundings are not auspicious ;"—and that, once yielding, the good habit is sometimes fatally broken. So it happened to me on this, my first night at Ruby Hall.

"I am tired," I thought ; "the girls are having a good time ; it will look affected and priggish ; to-morrow night I can stay by myself." But, when I thought of the cold splendor of the cheerless room below, with no merry faces to brighten it, that decided me. I drew nearer to the light.

"What are you reading ?" called Bessy. "O yes, I see," as Nancy held up a reproving finger. As for me, I had opened at the thrilling words, "Let not your heart be troubled ; you believe in God, believe also in me." How inexpressibly sweet they were at that moment ! I seemed to see Doctor Henry's animated face, and to hear his approving words. "Thank God for Doctor Henry !" I said to myself, as I closed the book and knelt down by my bed. I had forgotten every thing now but my duty ; and I was more than delighted to see Bessy and Nancy kneeling side by side.

It was many an hour before I went to sleep that night, such a crowd of recollections crowded mind and memory. My father's face, with its anxious ex-



pression, seemed ever before me. Could I only have telegraphed to him, through some mental process, how much I loved him! Was it because he had been cold to me, I have often asked myself, that I loved him so wholly, so dearly? or was it the instinct of a heart that must have something to lean upon and love? How lonely the dear old home must seem! I did not dare to picture the idea, that Mrs. Davis and Martha had possessed themselves of the place; I waited, hoping for Bridget's labored letter. And again my father's melancholy face came up before me; and I prayed with all my heart, that the dear Lord God would avert the threatened evil.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### SEVERAL LETTERS AND A WALK.

THE second day, the postman brought letters for us all. Ah! were mine not welcome? Curling myself up in one of those ever memorable chairs, I read Cousin Philip's long and chatty missive. How good he was to give me all this time! What sweet counsel flowed from his pen! It was almost like talking to him.

"Your father is still at Hollyhoxy," he wrote, "but Martha Voles has not yet returned. Bridget, who mourns your absence, tells me that Mrs. Davis expects her back to-day. I told your father of the interview I witnessed the other day between his agent and Miss Martha, and he seemed genuinely surprised. I hope it may do good. Meanwhile I shall be on the watch. They cannot lock me out of Hollyhoxy whatever they do; and my eyes are wide open whenever I go there. Doctor Henry is also on the watch. He let fall some hints yesterday that rather astonished me. He is a keen man, and will leave no stone unturned to aid us.

"By the way, my dear little girl, I have some bad news for you. Blossom has disappeared. Whether that rascally agent has put him out of the way,—for I think the man hated him,—or he has gone into retirement to mourn for his mistress, I cannot at pres-



ent tell ; but I am exceedingly sorry. Do not think it was want of care on my part. I have been a whole vigilance committee ; and Blossom appeared to know it, and resent my espionage."

"O Blossom, Blossom !" I cried, half to myself.

"Did you mean me?" asked Bessy, looking up brightly from her letter.

"I meant my glorious old Blossom, my Newfoundland."

"If there's any thing I *could* worship, if it wasn't a sin," said Bessy, "it's a Newfoundland."

"He was so beautiful ! as white as snow ; and he is lost—or else,"—and I broke down for a moment,—  
"they have killed him."

"O I hope not," said Bessy ; "wait till the next letter comes. I predict you'll have found him by that time."

This was consoling.

"You ought to see Bessy's letter, said Nancy, who was leaning over her cousin's chair. "Every one of her brothers has signed it. Read the postscript, Bessy."

"Why, yes," said Bessy. "Olly writes it, you know. He's the oldest, and this is what his postscript says :—

"Such a time as I had to get them together ! Phil was in the stable doctoring Billy, who has the epizoo ; Hal was just putting the finishing touch on a picture ; Paul was gone gunning as far as the front porch, and had to pull off his hunting-gloves ; and Walter, I believe he was in the midst of a sermon, or



something of the kind, for there was speculation in his eye, and I had to labor some time to bring him to his senses. "Letter—sign—Bessy? O yes," says he, "you're writing Bessy? with pleasure;" and he used that same stumpy old quill, as you see.

" " "There," said he; "if Bessy judges by the body of the ink, she'll think I love her better than you all." And so adieu, darling. OLLY.' "

"Who is that scrawl from, my dear?" asked Nancy.

Bessy uttered a wild cry, tossed her hands up, and began capering round the room as she sang, laughing:—

" " A love-letter! a love-letter!  
What would you give to see?  
Our Johnny is going a-courting,  
And they say he is courting me.' "

"Pray don't let us think you are out of your senses," said Nancy.

"O I am quite—gone, irrevocably. It's my first; and I'm nineteen next month. And whom do you think it's from? Seth! that ridiculously ardent young man. Well, I'll put it in a glass case. If you could only see the spelling, girls! He says nothing ever made him feel so bad—with a big 'F'—as the way he's 'fealing' now. He says he's rich, worth a hundred thousand dollars; and I should have all the horses I want, with an 'a' in them. Oh! he says I shall live in style, with a big 'S' and a 'tile;' and he spells home, 'h-o-a-m,' and carriages with a 'K;' and his 'h-a-r-t' is in his 't-h-r-o-t-e' (and I guess it is); and 'meezles' and 'hoping-cough' ain't nothing to



what he is 'snuffering' now—upon my word, girls, it actually is 'snuffering.' See, Nancy."

"Poor fellow! he is evidently in earnest," said Nancy, after we had laughed nearly till we cried.

"Poor fellow! Rich ninny, you mean. With day-schools in the land, to dare to write me a letter like that! I'm ashamed of him! There, that's what I think of it!" and she tore it into inch bits, and threw it into the fire. "I'm just going to write him,—

"No!

"*Yours respectfully;*"

only I couldn't say 'yours respectfully,' because I haven't the least bit of respect for him. There's the 'Complete Letter-Writer,' and 'Webster's Dictionary;' and he hadn't the sense to use either. Come, who's for a walk? I want some green worsted, and I'm going down to the 'deacon's relict' to get it."

I was very glad for a chance to go out; for I missed my long rambles with Cousin Philip. The road was hilly and picturesque. By the side, and leaning against banks of the darkest green, shone the red sumac. The sky was aglow with the tenderest coloring; the hills and the rocky heights in the distance were alive with fire and asleep with shadow—such shadow! vivid as a shape and black as ebony.

Presently, we came to the river road. Old Graylock loomed up on the other side; and its far, faint shadow the ripples at our side caught and held. The river flashed in the sun, brawled here where it was shallow, sang there where it was deep. Here, there, and everywhere were pictures, any one of which, on



canvas, would have made an artist's fame. A little church set in a bit of exquisite greenery; a school-house, with the children tumbling out and shouting like mad things; the grocery, with sharp pointed roof and a long vista inside with barrels at the end; the tavern, coach at the door; and then, after a short walk past little houses, thrifty and bright as work and paint could make them, a tiny cottage all by itself, not unpicturesque, holding three rooms; and this was where the "deacon's relict" lived. The one window facing the east had on its few shelves three red apples, a gingerbread horse, a tumbler full of fly-specked candy, some spools of cotton, a doll swathed in cotton-wool, and a bunch of bright worsteds.

The "relict" was a bright little woman, her brow full of fine wrinkles, as kindly and sweet a face at three score and ten as I had ever seen. Through an open door, we saw the big four-poster, with its full feather bed and red-and-white calico quilt. Another door led into the best room, so that, if ever guest did come, there was always a place ready. The tins over the dresser, the old blue "Chanay" on the shelves, the bright copper warming-pan of venerable memory and usage,—gave to the whole interior that air of thrift and comfort which prevails in the homesteads of New England, large and small.

"How's your granny, dear?" asked Mrs. Dimple; and the name corresponded beautifully with the dimples in her cheeks.

"She's—I wonder how she is?" queried Bessy, with a puzzled air. "Well, she's always sick, you know; and I guess she's no worse."



“Well, if the Lord sends it she must bear it,” said Mrs. Dimple, with her sweet smile.

“You couldn’t convince me that the Lord sends it,” said Bessy. “How much do I owe you? Ninepence—here it is. Come, girls;” and we left Mrs. Dimple smiling doubtfully and shaking her head.

“Do you know you made that sweet old woman look sad?” asked Nanny.

“She shouldn’t say platitudes then. I dare say the Lord sends sickness to some people, because whom He loves He chastens; but He can’t possibly love grandy; she’s too hateful. She hasn’t even sent for you to come up-stairs, has she?” and she turned to me.

“No,” I said; “but she has a reason, I believe.”

“Of course: she has a reason for swallowing medicines, but it’s only in her imagination. I do believe it’s beginning to snow!”

We hurried home. An early dusk had set in. Whether it was that, or the allusion of Bessy to my grandmother, I could not tell; but a sudden homesickness seized me. I longed to see Bridget’s honest face; my heart ached for Blossom. Nor was the feeling dispelled till long after tea, when Aunt Genevieve came into the great parlor, with the inevitable candle.

“If I were going to paint a picture of New England in the country,” said Bessy, sniffing with her cunning, impertinent little nose, “I would paint my canvas black, and put a candle in the middle.”

“Yes, I certainly should prefer gas,” said Aunt



Jenny, as she put the candle down ; “ but we must bow to the inevitable.”

I looked in her face. How calm it was ! and yet the eye so soft had been all alight with the glow of a fervent love. The prim lips had whispered sweet words, the cheek had reddened at the sound of a coming footstep. She had loved and lost ; she was therefore sacred.

It is a too common error to attribute to those whose quiet habits and orderly mode of existence make them seem exceptional, especially single women, a passionless career and temperament. Some of these pale, silent women could tell an experience which would stir the heart to its depths.

Aunt Jenny was one of these living martyrs. Her pathetic story, which Bessy had told me,—the buried life among the mountains of New England ; her rigid adherence to duty and principle, cost what it might ; the sweet serenity of her countenance,—disposed me to look upon her as a being of another order than myself. I believe we girls had all gained a new point of vision at Ruby Hall. Our lives had been so full of vitality before that, that it was difficult to imagine an experience at once isolated and exceptional. It was obvious, also, that Genevieve had not lapsed into the prim fancies and peculiar habits that, to a youthful perception, are inseparable from a spinster's condition.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### BESSY'S DECISION.

I SAT back that evening, making my observations, and let the girls talk. I wanted to study Aunt Genevieve, chiefly that I might have an objective point for my letter to Cousin Phil. Genevieve Normandy was a lovely woman. She was not as fair as my mother ; her expression was less emotional. The practice of repression had become habitual ; but that did not prevent her from being very, very lovely. A narrow circlet of pale blue ribbon brightened the glossy brown hair, which waved delicately without the aid of crimping-pins or other instruments of torture. At her throat, was a knot of the same color. A singular purity dwelt in her face and colored all her movements. She gave me the same impression of living on a higher plane than ordinary mortals that Doctor Henry did, though in a different and more artistic sense. Her dress was simple and becoming. Slender bands of gold clasped the well rounded wrists ; and, though she still wore the white apron, which seemed an indispensable adjunct to her costume, yet it was so graceful with its dainty ruffles and edges of lace, that it only added to the youthfulness and attractiveness of her appearance.

“ You are going to stay with us,” said Nanny, delightedly. “ That is an unexpected pleasure.”



“Thank you, dear,” responded Aunt Genevieve. “Yes, a little while. Mother went to sleep without her drops,—she has been very restless all day,—and I have left Mrs. Clute on guard.”

“Splendid watch-dog,” said Bessy, saucily.

“She’s just as good as gold,” was the response; “and, when she said I must trust to her ‘diligence,’ I knew what she meant.”

“Vigilance, I suppose,” said Nancy. “We have very few such servants in New York. Have you ever been to New York, aunty?”

“I’ve never been anywhere, my dear,” said Aunt Jenny, moving a prim old hand-screen worked in green and gold by some dead and gone Normandy, to shade her face, and taking out her lace-needles.

Bessy was on her knees on the broad marble hearth, roasting apples. Presently, she passed round some nuts in a paper bag.

“Why don’t you ring for plates, my dear?” asked Aunt Genevieve.

“Because this is a great deal nicer; or, if not nicer, more enjoyable. It reminds me of my youth—and of the army,” she added, puckering her lips and trying with all her might to look prim and proper, as became age.

“Why, Aunt Jenny!” she exclaimed, “I’ve seen so little of you that I really and truly thought your eyes were blue.”

“None of the Normandies have blue eyes, my dear,” was the answer, a touch of pride in the gentle voice. “By the way, Ada Stewart, you had a letter to-day,” turning to me.



"Yes; from Cousin Philip," I said.

"Ah!" she moved the screen with a quick, nervous turn of the hand.

"And I—had a letter, too," said Bessy, creeping to cut off the firelight between Aunt Jenny and me; "and it was a proposal; and he spells horse 'h-o-a-r-s-e.' I think before I would marry a man like that, I'd wait here in the mountains till I was fossilized."

I saw the delicate cheek nearest me turn faintly red; and Bessy seemed to think, a moment after, that she had been guilty of an impertinence, for she made mouths at me, expressive of violent penitence, under cover of the shade cast by the lamp-screen.

"I hope you never will be a fossil, dear; it is so pleasant to see youth, and have young faces about one," was the gentle reply.

"Young faces! why, your face is young enough, I'm sure," said Bessy, blundering into a compliment. "You don't look twenty; and—please, if it isn't a saucy question, how old are you?"

"Not at all, my dear; I am thirty-one," was the quiet reply.

"And you have always lived in this pokey old place?"

"I have seen some happy hours in 'this pokey old place,' as you call it."

"Well, I think it's time you saw something of the world. Mercy! the thought of dying without even seeing New York."

"But I hope to live a few years longer, even if I



don't see New York," responded Aunt Jenny. "Of course I couldn't go there, even to see my relations, and leave mother alone."

"What an *awful* constitution she has got!" groaned Bessy.

Aunt Jenny smiled involuntarily, though perhaps something like heartache came with a vision of those piercing black eyes, that clear, strong voice, whose domination she had served longer than did Jacob for Rachel.

Hereupon ensued an animated discussion concerning the advantages of city life—amusements, lectures, galleries; and the little lady, though I saw she drank in every word eagerly, and was now pale, now rosy, kept whatever emotion stirred her heart well under control.

"Cousin Phil," said I, oracularly, "has travelled almost all over the world and lived in most of the principal cities; but he says he prefers the beauty and quiet of the country to the finest city he ever saw."

Aunt Genevieve turned to look at me, her face all aglow, just for a second; then her head bent low over her needles.

"O of course—an old man—exhausted them all, I suppose; wants to rest his silvery head in the lap of solitude," said Bessy, mockingly.

"Indeed! I'd like you to see him," said I, indignantly. "Silver head! why, his hair is as dark as mine; and you never saw a more splendid moustache."



The laugh was against me; but Aunt Genevieve turned again, and gave me a sweet, loving glance. Then she went at her knitting; but her fingers trembled, and something fell upon the needles that made them suddenly and briefly bright as any diamond, or else my eyes played me false.

Pat made his appearance just then, after his usual knock, and came in head on one side and visage elongated. Every red hair seemed to bristle with indignation.

“Th’ould mistress be wantin’ of yer, Miss Genevave,” he said; and, as his quick eye took in all the comfort and beauty of the situation, it rested with a softened, pitying look on the gentle face turned towards him.

“Very well, Pat,” was the quiet answer; and Aunt Genevieve gathered up her needles.

“Indade, Miss Genevave, I think she might be jist satisfied wid the housekeeper once in a way,” he said. Long and faithful service entitled him to a degree of familiarity.

“Never mind, Pat; naturally she prefers me,” said my aunt. “Good-evening, girls; enjoy yourselves;” and she was gone.

“And the apples just done to a turn!” moaned Bessy. “Pat, get us some wood, won’t you?—well seasoned.”

“Yes, miss; if it’s well sazoned ye wish for, it’s well sazoned I’ll git. There’s on’y forty cord out in the open; bin layin’ there a matther of two years. But it’s moighty harrrd on Miss Genevave: *she* be as



harrrd as an oak-three at the heart of it ;” and he went out, shaking his head.

“Saucy and handsome, rather,” said Bessy, turning the apples, as they spluttered and broke into drifts of white over their crimson jackets.

“Pat is saucy enough, but by no means handsome,” said Nancy.

“I adore red hair,” responded Bessy. “Can’t we get up a frolic of some sort ?” she asked, her mood changing. “Who sings ? I know just by the crinkle in her eyes !” and she pointed triumphantly to me.

“Here’s the piano, quite rusty for want of use,—the piano your own mother played upon, no doubt, though I believe it has been made over once or twice.”

I went to the instrument. Its tones were silvery sweet, more like the resonance of glass than of wire.

“O you darling !” cried Bessy, hugging me. “Bless my soul, what a voice ! She don’t know her own value. Oh, how sweet ! how clear ! how beautiful !”

“Can you sing ‘Bonnie Doon’ ?” asked Nancy.

“Just like Nanny for all the world—old songs !” said Bessy.

“I sing nearly all the Scotch songs,” I said ; “Cousin Philip likes them.”

“What a paragon this Cousin Philip must be !” said Bessy. “Why won’t he come here ? Ask him, will you ?”

By this time, I was prepared to sing “Bonnie Doon.” I never felt such an impulse to do my best. The acoustic properties of the quaint old parlor must



nave been remarkable ; for my voice rang and rang to the very outer limits. I had just got half through the second stanza, when the door flew open, and an apparition appeared, dancing, waving long, lank arms, wheezing, and shaking.

It was Mrs. Clute, her wide capstrings tied atop her head, her gown pinned up to the knees, and her scarlet petticoat making a bright foil to the general dimness of the perspective.

“In the name of Ruby Hall and all its patron saints!” cried Bessy, her cheeks as pale as death, “what do you mean? Have you got St. Vitus, or is there Shaker blood in your veins?”

“Don’t, young ladies!” cried Mrs. Clute, in apparent agony, as she tried to catch her breath. “Of all things, that chune! it nearly sot the old lady into ’stericks; and poor Miss Jenny is that faint with holding of her mother and trying to soodge her, that it’s awful to see her eyes sticking out; and I stumbling down the staircase almost three steps at a time, on my head, to stop it. And the voice—mercy on me! the voice was that poor lamb’s over again. That’s what did the mischief. You see, I was a-settin’ before the fire, an’ was jest a-goin’;—for the old lady is that pernickety that she can’t abear anybody about her but Miss Jenny, poor thing!—and, when that chune come up so clear and sweet, you’d never believe how she began to rave. Well, mercy! what next, I wonder.”

“Nanny, let’s go home,” said Bessy, petulantly. “If we can’t even sing,—and such a glorious voice,



and so much comfort to be got out of it!—I say I won't stay."

"O now, Miss Bessy," said Mrs. Clute, unpinning her skirts and restoring her capstrings to their normal condition, "don't be rash."

"Rash! to want to leave this miserable old den," said Bessy. "I think I'll go up-stairs to-morrow, and give grandy a piece of my mind. I'm quite capable of it, understand."

"Well," cried Mrs. Clute, with a heavily drawn breath, "you'd be the first one."

"I'll do it," said Bessy; "and my cousin shall sing too. Why, it's a dollar a ticket to hear Albani, and here's a voice as fine as hers to be had for the asking."

"Never mind," I said, feeling that I was the bone of contention. "I'll sing for you as much as you like up in our room; she can't hear there—and I found an old guitar this morning. We'll have it new strung, and I can play it."



## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE STORY OF THE LITTLE GIRL THAT SANG.

MRS. CLUTE disappeared at the ringing of a bell. Presently, in came Pat with a basket of luscious grapes, with Mrs. Clute's compliments.

"Her son brought 'em," said Pat. "He's a hogriculturist, I think."

"Horticulturist, you mean, Pat," said Bessy. "Aren't they beauties? a sort of compensation for our disappointment. Did you forget the wood, Pat?"

"Not a bit of it, miss; I'll bring it in directly," said Pat.

"If grandy should only live till ninety," said Bessy, sorrowfully,—“and she's bound to do that,—there's twenty years of slavery for that blessed little Genevieve. Why, it's simply burying her alive! Think of her having to soothe and pet and coddle her to-night just because you sung!”

"No; because I reminded her of somebody else," I said. "Who was it?"

"Why, I suppose," said Nancy, deliberately eating her grapes, "it was the ghost."

"Now you are talking nonsense," I said.

"Well, that's only tradition, of course; but you know,—or perhaps you don't know; we all do,—that the most beautiful of grandy's daughters married against her will, just as your mother did. But she



did not happen to marry such a man as your father. He was unkind; and, when he found there was no money coming, took his wife abroad; and there she died, leaving one little child. I don't wonder grandy was nearly driven crazy by this trial, for the man was an adventurer; but she had no right to carry her enmity to the second generation. Here comes Pat with the wood; he can tell you all about it, if we can get him to talk."

The man came forward with his arms full, almost staggering under the load of logs, which he placed in the great carved box, covered with plush when not in use. Settling himself upon one knee, he lifted the poker, but, before stirring the great bed of crimson, glowing embers, he gave a flourish with the iron, and brought it down upon the blazing back-log, over which thrills of live flame like crimson waves were running; for it was burned almost to breaking. Then, as the sparks and coals rattled and fell and fused, and marched in glittering phalanx up the broad, black background of the huge chimney, he said, with emphasis, glancing around,—

"An' that's the way it'll come to her, faix, if she don't repint."

"Come to whom, Pat?" asked Nanny.

"Th'ould mistress—maning no disrespict. Af she don't bind soon, she'll be broken suddint;" and the man's face looked almost heroic in the glow of the fire. "I've no patience wid folks as sind their own flesh and blood away to be starved;" and Pat ended the sentence with fierce emphasis.



“Do you remember the little girl that sang?” asked Bessy, with a glance at me.

“Do I? doan’t I?” queried Pat, with a solemn shake of the head. “She’s heavy on the mistress’s conscience to this day. And a swate little thing she was, as swate in dying as in living. ’Twas ten years ago, mebbe, when she come here. There was company, but they’d all gone out a-nutting. There was a frost, I remember, and purty could weadther. These fingers let the child in, and she give me a note for the ould mistress. The note I give to Mrs. Clute for to carry up, and I let little miss into the parlor; and I couldn’t help looking through the glass of the door to see what would she do. Firstly she give a look to all the pictures, a-walking round with that pretty, graceful way the mother of her had; then she seemed to take note of all the furniture; an’, last of all, she went to the piano, and opened it as soft as a little mouse, and sot down and tinkled, tinkled so aisy, sort of; then she got on the low cricket by the fire, where her ma often sot afore her, and put her little chin in her little white hand—I’d have sworn it was Miss Hatty hersilf, the darlin’!

“Presently,” continued Pat, shifting his position a little, “Mrs. Clute comes a-walkin’ in, stately like,—you all know what a grand person she is,—and, seeing the child, she stopped short. The girl looks up this way, and says, timid like,—

“‘Are you my grandmother?’

“‘The Lord preserve us!’ said Mrs. Clute (but, mind ye, she’s never tired of telling how she be some-



times mistook for th' ould mistress), 'you must be Hatty Normandy's child.'

" 'Yes, she was my mother,' says the little crater.

" With that, Mrs. Clute she jist ketches her up, and hugs her like—like any thing, and tells her that, though she's not the grandmother of her, she loves her mightily, and all that. And then bethought she that she had an answer in her hand; and, with a mighty grave face, she put the billet into them little white fingers.

" Sure, it was bad, what followed," said Pat, shaking his head.

" 'She won't see me!' cries the child; and down she goes, white as a sheet, on the floor. Well, the housekeeper worked over her and brung her to. Poor child! she wouldn't stay here at all, at all."

" The little goose!" burst in Bessy, with sparkling eyes, while I was almost crying the case was so analogous to my own. " You wouldn't catch me to go away," she added, her face crimson; " no, not for all the curses of all the Normandies in creation. Stay here! I'd stay here till Doomsday, if I had to sleep in the scullery. I'm afraid she was a pitiful little thing, that small cousin of mine, with no spirit."

" 'Dade, ye might be proud of her, thin,' said Pat, with a reproving glance. " You know, perhaps, old Nurse Dimple down here. She wasn't a Dimple them days, but a—" and Pat scratched his head, and reflected.

" Leg-o'-mutton?" suggested Bessy.

" Go away wid the likes of ye!" said Pat, laugh-



ing ; “ a Lamb she was, now I think of it—she that had nursed all the Normandies ; and Mrs. Clute sent the poor child there. Very well, Miss Genevave prays and labors wid the mother of her, so that by-and-bye she says the child can come, but she never wishes to see her.”

“ I’d prayed and labored, I think,” said Bessy, her eyes flashing.

“ Ah ! but ye don’t know th’ ould mistress ; she’s too much for the grapple of us. Still, who knows ? ye may have been sint here to do the Lord’s work ; for a nater little imp of mischief I’ll declare I never sot eyes on.”

“ Well, Pat, I must say your compliment is neither very choice nor elegantly put,” said Bessy, laughing.

“ P’r’aps not, miss,” said Pat ; “ but it’s no harm I’m maning. If ye have almost turned th’ ould house inside out, ye might turn th’ ould mistress.”

“ Well, the child came here,” said Nancy.

“ Yes, she came ; but the spirit of her was broken. She’d not had the best of tratement, poor soul ! she’d been exposed to many sufferings, and it pulled down the constitution of her. She’d sit and sing, all by herself, at th’ ould piany there ; and her gift was wonderful,—for her father was a professor of music,—an’ sometimes, more oftener, she’d sit wid Mrs. Clute an’ me in the housekeeper’s room. And so she faded and faded ; an’ never an eye did that wicked ould woman set on her to the last.”

“ I don’t wonder she couldn’t hear the singing to-



night," said Bessy. "Cousin Ada Stewart, you look as glum as a sorrowful canary. You are not going to trouble yourself because grandy won't see you, are you?"

"I think," I said, from the fullness of my heart, I had rather she would never wish to see me."

"Bravo!" cried Bessy, clapping her hands as Pat left the room; "there spoke the Normandy spirit. Nanny, I begin to perceive that just possibly, as Pat says, I've been sent here to do the Lord's work, though he did hint quite as broadly that I was an imp of Satan. My spirits rise at the prospect. Daniel was kept unharmed, even in the lion's den; and, if the Lord will give me the right words to say, I'll say them."



## CHAPTER XXVI.

### UP IN GRANDY NORMANDY'S ROOM.

I SHALL take an author's liberty of dropping the first person, and transcribe what Aunt Genevieve has since told me took place that night when my unlucky song penetrated the silence of grandy's sick-room.

When Miss Genevieve left us, at the summons of her mother, with some little reluctance, she stole silently up the stairs, passing the great clock at their foot, which had ticked so many Normandies in and out during its two hundred years of time-keeping.

The hall was black with shadows. The candle flickered in the strong draughts, its small light showing here and there a glimmer of the polished mahogany, that, quaintly carved, formed the solid old-time cornice and the top of the ponderous banisters.

The stairs were very wide, very slippery, very brown, and very bright with long usage and much wax. On the first landing, was a deep, arched window draped with heavy curtains.

Miss Genevieve went quietly on, thinking of neither window nor stairs. She had been acquainted with their solid beauty from childhood, and needed no candle in the darkest night to go up or down. She was conscious only of a new delight, which she hardly dared acknowledge to herself. Her step was more



bounding ; her heart swelled with a momentary happiness too great to be expressed.

“Thirty-one, and still sentimental !” she murmured, with a nervous little laugh. “But it makes me happy.”

She was unwontedly happy. Contact with the bright young natures below was like a reviving cordial to the fainting invalid. A tint of their beauty, a breath of their laughter, a sweet waft of their blessed youth, she carried with her from the stately old parlor to the stately old room she presently entered. It was in size and shape an exact counterpart of that she had just left.

With the exception of the area just beyond a small but bright wood fire burning on the hearth, and a square of brilliant Turkey carpet, the room was dark. Nothing was discernible at first sight, save when the fire sent fitful flashes out into the gloom beyond, when one might see a tall, richly gilded old screen, half enclosing a bed of ancient shape, heavy with draperies.

Another leap of the red flame ; and, on high pillows, might be discerned a thin, dark face, with finely outlined features that must once have been surpassingly beautiful. This face was framed in a sheer, closely crimped ruffle of costly old lace ; and the large, haughty dark eyes, in which the fire of youth still burned, gave one the impression of an unquiet spirit.

Mrs. Clute had just come up with some grapes, and hoped to pass away unobserved.

“Don’t whisper, Clute ; it’s bad manners. What did you leave me for, Jenny ?” asked the invalid ;



and her voice, though high pitched, was not ungentle. "You know that, if there is one thing that can be done more awkwardly than another, Clute is the woman to do it."

"You were sleeping so sweetly, mother, when I went out," said Genevieve, while Mrs. Clute, knowing by experience that protest or explanation were alike useless, quietly left.

"You know I always like you to be here when I waken;" and her hand groped for the fine handkerchief that lay on her pillow. "Clute spills my drops; she always does. Women with large fingers and clumsy thumbs should never be entrusted with the care of the sick. Not only are they unpleasant to the sight, but they indicate a coarse nature."

Poor Genevieve looked at her own slender fingers with a sigh. How many drops they had poured out, to be sure!

"I'm miserable to-night, very miserable," moaned the invalid. "What time is it?"

Miss Genevieve, watch in hand, stepped back to compare it with the clock.

"Just nine, mother, to a minute."

"Only nine! I thought it was midnight."

"So you see I didn't leave you for a great while," said Genevieve, with a smile. "Shall I change your pillow?"

"No; I'll get up; I'll sit awhile by the fire. I'm so wretchedly ill to-night! I wish I didn't see faces—faces! I wish I didn't."

Her daughter brought a rich silk dressing-gown,



which she carefully warmed and wrapped about her mother, handed her a cane, and, herself a support on the other side, she led her to the fire.

“Faces! faces! faces!” muttered the unhappy old woman. “When shall I have done seeing faces? It’s so hard to bring them up and then to lose them! But, worse than all, the ingratitude!”

“Now, mother, can I do any thing to make you more comfortable?” asked Genevieve, cheerfully. The small figure standing there in its dark blue Cashmere and its soft laces made a strong contrast. One would never have thought the two were mother and daughter.

“Yes, bury me, my dear,” said grandy, with a singular smile. “Strange, isn’t it, how hard it is for some old people to die?”

“Don’t talk so, mother,” said Genevieve, softly; “you make my heart ache. What should I do without you?”

“You ask that? Girl, don’t be silly. I should be a great burden gone; everybody would think so—say so, perhaps. I’ve a little common sense, child.” She leaned back heavily in the great chair.

“Jenny!”

“Well, mother?” Miss Genevieve had seated herself on the other side of the fire.

“I never saw you look so well; the fire gives color to your face. Jenny, you just missed being a beauty, didn’t you?”

“Perhaps, mother;” and she said it with a smile.

“I don’t know but it’s a curse to love beauty so



so well. I'm glad, on the whole, that you weren't a beauty, child ; for then you would have left me, like the rest, all alone, all alone."

"No, mother ; don't say that."

"I say you would," was the stern rejoinder. "Who is down-stairs?"

"Only the girls."

"What are they doing?"

"Chatting and fancy work. They seemed to be enjoying themselves."

"That's very well ; but no theatricals remember."

"O no ; I'm sure they don't think of such a thing."

"I hope not ; but girls now-a-days do think of every thing, and fancy themselves geniuses. There's that little rowdy, Bessy. That girl shakes my nerves terribly. Ah ! but the time goes slow."

"Shall I read to you, mother?" asked Miss Genevieve.

"No. How cold it is !"

"It is snowing, I think," said Miss Genevieve, laying a Cashmere shawl over her mother's shoulders.

"I am sorry you invited that girl, Genevieve. I can't get over that horrible piece of news."

"But you wished it yourself, mother."

"She had better go away," was the rejoinder.

"O no, mother, not after we have invited her so cordially ! It would be almost an insult."

"Her father's child is an insult to me !" exclaimed the woman. "I should think she would go of her own accord."

"She would if she knew you wished it ; she has



enough of the Normandy spirit for that. But remember, she is your own grandchild, mother."

"She is not; I disown her utterly. While I live, I will be mistress of my own house;" and the stormy old woman bent forward, looking fixedly and gloomily into the fire. "When I am gone, do as you please, do as you please."

These words touched Miss Genevieve. If her mother spoke of her own death a hundred times a day, it would always grieve her. Long servitude had made her nervous and sensitive. But she determined in her own mind, that her niece should not be turned out of the house. She would watch keenly that no note found its way, written in grandy's cramped, old-fashioned characters, where it might make desolate an already sorrowful heart.

Just then, a clear, harmonious voice sounded through the hall. Mrs. Clute was just bringing in the gruel.

"What's that?" cried grandy, leaning forward; "O Heavenly Father, has she come back! My drops, Jenny! Stop that singing! stop it, unless you wish to see me die before your eyes! I am in misery! I am in torment!" And still the voice floated up.

"That tune! the very one *she* sang; and I never saw her, even in her coffin! Jenny! Jenny! I am dying."

"For a moment, it did seem as if her words were true. Genevieve, distracted, flew from remedy to remedy; Mrs. Clute, as we have seen, hurried downstairs. It was more than an hour before the invalid could compose her nerves sufficiently to sleep.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

“WHAT DOES THE WORD ‘RELIGIOUS’ MEAN?”

“WE can’t sing ; I’m tired of knitting ; we shall have no company now, it’s past nine. Let’s go up-stairs and tell stories. We’ll sit all in a row ; it’s snugger up there than it is here. Some way, Pat’s talk has made me nervous. That child laid here in her coffin : so have all the generations of Normandies. Do let’s go, quick !”

We rang for Pat to put out the fire, and, talking in whispers, scurried through the long hall leading up-stairs, and to the bedroom. Sally was there, in cap and apron ; and she made haste to light the candles, for she had been sitting knitting by the firelight. I had noticed Pat making a sign to Bessy, and detaining her for a moment. As soon as Sally could be sent away, Bessy turned to us, laughing.

“I’ve got something to show you, girls,” she said, looking very mysteriously around. “Pat kept me a moment, you know ;—well, he gave me something, and it’s to be a ‘sacret,’ so don’t any of you tell. It’s in a ‘nate’ piece of buckskin, too, and even sewed up for fear of the eyes of her—that’s grandy, you know. He thinks it’s as much as his place is worth ; and it was done ‘by a foreign chap with a shelebrated name.’ Now,—have I roused your curiosity sufficiently?”

“I can answer for myself,” said Nanny, pulling



down her hair, which hung in charming curls; "and I'm quite sure Cousin Ada is dying to know what in the world you have got."

"Oh, it's a miniature, old style, and must have cost lots of money to be painted by so celebrated a painter;—for you see it was taken in Paris;—and the rim is all set with pearls and just the tiniest diamonds you ever saw. He was cleaning out an old trunk in the stable, and he found it just thrown there as if it were a thing of no worth. Attention! young ladies. There, now you may admire it."

We both crowded nearer, for Bessy was polishing the glass; and I unconsciously caught her by the arm, for I never was so much astonished in my life.

"I didn't know there were two of them!" I cried.

"Bless me, child, you've made a black-and-blue spot!" exclaimed Bessy, rubbing her arm. "What's the matter with her? her face is a study."

By this time, I had recovered my composure, and said, as calmly as I could:—

"It was natural I should be surprised. That is the miniature of Cousin Philip taken when he was nineteen, for his mother, fourteen years ago, by a French artist who had just received the prize of Rome, and has since become distinguished. I've seen the original,—or else this is the original and I've seen the copy,—many and many a time. Cousin Philip keeps it in a little ebony box on his bureau. I used often to take it out, chiefly, I am afraid, because I admired the frame."

"Cousin Ada Stewart," said Bessy, solemnly, "are



you aware of the importance of what you have just said?”

“Well, I can say it again if you think it is not sufficiently circumstantial,” I remarked.

“And this Cousin Philip is a bachelor?”

“Yes; thirty three or four years old.”

“She don’t take yet,” said Bessy, unconscious of the slang. “Did your cousin never speak to you of Miss Genevieve Normandy?—how he loved, wooed, and almost won her; but that her mother forbidding the nuptials, Miss Jenny, like an obedient little girl, preferred to stay with nurse and be domineered over by her mother, our venerable grandmother up-stairs.”

“What! was it Aunt Genevieve?” The light burst upon me all at once. I was bewildered; and yet I saw it all. Aunt Genevieve’s sudden emotion at mention of his name, her curious glances that I remembered now. I had blundered like this before, I, who prided myself on my ability to read character. Twice had I been foiled, once by one of the purest, and once by one of the basest, women I had ever known. And yet I had never heard the name of my aunt in connection with Cousin Philip. Even my mother had not spoken of it to me: she had only said that he had been very deeply disappointed, and it had influenced his life. I felt so strangely about it, as if I held the future of two lives in my hand; for who could tell for what good purpose I had been sent to Cummingford?

“I dare say poor Aunt Genevieve put the miniature away for good in a trunk; and, without her



knowledge, the trunk was taken out of the house. Grandy might have found it, you know : she wouldn't like to destroy it, but thought it would never come to light again ; for the hay was thrown over the trunk. Well, well, wonders will never cease ! Is Cousin Philip as handsome as this ?”

“ Indeed,” I said, “ he is much handsomer. He was a boy then ; now he is a man. I wish you could see him.”

“ I wish I could,” she said, thoughtfully. “ No wonder he declined to come to Ruby Hall. I heard he had promised never to come till Aunt Jenny sent for him. Poor little Aunt Jenny ! She isn't a bit like me ; I couldn't do it.”

“ O yes you could, if it was your duty,” said Nancy. Bessy shook her head.

“ It seems to me I couldn't,” she said ; “ I'm so impetuous. Mamma has made it a life-work to cure me, she says. I was so queer as a child ; I remember myself so perfectly—a regular little outlaw, hating rules, hating work, study, school, full of fun and fury. I know people think me a light-headed, volatile girl. I wish they could have seen me then—a regular bundle of contradictions, doing and saying things that struck horror to all who happened to hear or see me. But mother never gave up hope ; she made rules that I was forced in some way to obey ; and I never knew her to be so angry as when a visitor said one day,—

“ ‘ That child will make your heart ache when she grows up.’

“ ‘ She has made my heart ache many times al-



ready,’ said my mother; ‘but, when she grows up, she will take care that I shall be proud of her.’

“I don’t know but that was the turning-point. I never forgot it. I had made my mother’s heart ache many a time. ‘Her heart shall never ache any more,’ I kept saying to myself. Now only suppose if mamma had acquiesced, as some mothers do, and had shown no faith in me! I don’t suppose she knows to this day what her words did for me. And, as to fun, I do love it; I can’t help it. I take it naturally from my father, who is a born jester. Grandy thinks I’m awful—calls me a rowdy, and even says I’m not a Christian. I don’t know; I believe I am quite as good a Christian as she is: that’s not saying much, is it, girls? Don’t laugh at me; I do try to be a Christian—my mother’s daughter could hardly help that. And, since Ada has come, I’ve been reading my Bible. I got all by myself this morning, and says I, ‘I’ll just read five verses to begin with.’

“Why, girls, before I knew it, almost, I had finished five chapters. I never read any thing so interesting in all my life. Talk of novels! Just now I’d rather read the Bible than any novel I ever heard of. Somehow it has always been a sealed book to me until now; and *you* are really religious,” she said, turning to me; “what does the word mean? Give me your version.”

“It means to me,” I said, “so far as I have got, to put every thing into the hands of God.”

“Well, yes; let me see. You’re to have no will of your own then. That would make *me* a nonentity.”



“But, if God knows best, and His will is best, and He will guide you just right and give you all you need to make life pleasant, and many things that you want, don’t you see you get rid of all the care?”

Bessy laughed heartily.

“Isn’t it a selfish little puss? But then, we have all illustrated that very thing, as children. If our little wills only went the way that mother’s did, how happy we were! And what care had we for the morrow! and how sure we were of sympathy and comfort and food and clothes and guidance! Yes, I guess Cousin Ada Stewart has hit it. Grown up, we must be as little children in order to be Christians. Well, well, I can’t follow it out, only that I know it will end gloriously. I couldn’t be an Infidel; maybe I haven’t brains enough to reason out things contrary to my inclinations. Queer as I was when a child, I used to want to die and go to Heaven; and I held daily talks with an angel I called ‘Saspy,’ who, I imagined, came down from the good Lord’s garden every day to talk to me. But, come, I think I’ve run on long enough about myself. Let’s sit in a row before the fire; and I’ll take down my hair, and you can tell us a story, Cousin Ada, or something about Paris—beautiful Paris!”

A long, low howl under our window sounded just then, and seemed to freeze the very marrow of my bones.

“Grandy will die now, surely,” said Bessy, “if she hears that. Nothing troubles her so much as the howl of a dog. There it is again! It curdles my



blood. I'm going to look out, though;" and she lifted the sash. The snowflakes, whirled by the wind, sifted into the room.

"There's something white down there," she said, breathlessly; "and it lifted itself as I opened the window. It can't be a wolf, can it?"

"White, did you say?" I cried, getting up from the rug.

"Yes, a white thing wagging a tail; I don't know what it is."

A vague suspicion flitted through my brain; I grew hot and then cold at the thought. Going to the window, I called, softly,—

"Blossom! Blossom!"

The creature sprang up, and then I knew his yelp. I turned round, crying and laughing together.

"It's Blossom! it's my great, beautiful darling! He has followed me; he has found me. O girls, what shall I do?"

"Blossom, the Newfoundland? Why, where has he come from?" asked Bessy, incredulously. "You can't mean it;—then I say let's have him up. Glorious! what fun! what a dog! Hurry, or Pat will be out to see what it means, and he might hurt him."

Down we went, regardless of the weather, each girl carrying a candle. My heart was beating high with anticipation. I could not be mistaken: was ever human friend more faithful! How we unbarred the side door, I never knew. All I was fully conscious of was, that I was covered with snow and wet, cold paws; that it was Blossom; that he danced a Highland fling



all over me ; that Mrs. Clute stood crying in the hall, thinking Satan had come, sure ; and that Pat, trying to frown with the laugh shining through, cried, “Whist ! whist !” a good deal louder than Blossom’s loving whine ; and the housekeeper supplemented :—

“Whatever you’ll do with him, I don’t know ; for the old lady hates dogs. Ye’ll have to keep him mighty close.”

“I wonder if she loves any thing,” said Bessy, as she, Nancy, Blossom, and I followed each other upstairs, I trying to hold Blossom’s mouth. But the sagacious fellow did not need even a hint. He never spoke till safely sheltered before the blazing fire.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### BESSY'S VISIT TO GRANDY.

“**B**LOSSOM, how did you get here?” I asked, looking him straight in his lovely brown eyes. “Did some one send you, or did you come yourself?”

“He came himself,” said Bessy, fondly stroking the curling hair; “you might know he did. Look how thin he is, poor fellow! And what an anxious, worried expression his poor face carries! And, above all, how supremely happy and contented he is!”

Blossom sprang to his feet, looking earnestly at the door. It opened; and, to our surprise, in came Patrick, with chicken bones—actually, chicken bones—and a pitcher of milk.

“It’s all we could lay hands on, miss; we’d ’a’ baked him something nicer if it hadn’t been too late. Sure, and doesn’t he sit at table, like Christian folk?”

“I dare say he would if he wasn’t half starving,” said Bessy, as Pat’s twinkling eyes turned towards her; but a starving dog can’t wait for the table to be laid, can you, Blossom?” To which Blossom made answer by eating ravenously, and drinking every drop of the delicious milk. Then, with a deep-drawn sigh of perfect contentment, he stretched himself outside the fender.



“You’ll have to share him with us, cousin,” said Bessy, crouching down beside him, so that the light made her hair look one mass of gold. “I wonder if *he* has a mission to fulfill.”

“Look out, if grandy sees him,” said Nancy.

“She shan’t touch him; and don’t forget that I intend to take grandy on my shoulders.”

“You’ll never get her off,” laughed Nanny; “remember Sinbad! Poor old grandmother! there’s something so sad in her very stateliness, so pathetic even in her anger. I’m sure, if we only knew how, we might get at her heart.”

“I’m going for her head,” said Bessy; “I shall reason with her.”

The idea of Bessy’s reasoning made us laugh.

“It won’t do to be timid, and afraid of grandy,” said Bessy, oracularly. “She likes to see spirit, especially in a Normandy; and she must be made to feel her injustice. Think of her refusal to see our dear little cousin, Ada Stewart! Why, it’s an awful spirit.”

“I am afraid I am rather more at my ease not to see her,” I said. “Of course I’ve no particular love for her; she disowned my mother. It is better as it is, for both of us.”

“What! better for grandy to cherish that blind hate? No, no; not if I read my Bible to any purpose. Grandy must be brought to reason. And, as to this glorious fellow, he shall stay and share our triumph. Do you believe he followed you all the way? I have heard such things. How he must love you! That’s



true love ; and dogs are way ahead of human beings sometimes."

So Blossom slept inside the door, as he had always done at home ; and I felt as if a part of Hollyhoxy was here at Ruby Hall, and rested sweetly and securely. Why should I trouble my brains as to how he had found me ? he had found me, and that was triumph enough.

The next day was grandly white and pure and still. Such a snowstorm ! Blinding, furious, and fast it had come down all night, whirled by the wind in a thousand eddies, drifting up the hills, banking in the house.

" Hurrah, girls !" cried Bessy, sitting up in bed, while Blossom flew to the window, and leaned his great paws on the sill, " here's just such a storm as grandy likes—hurlyburly and bluster. Isn't it fine ? Lucky, you nice fellow, that we heard you last night. I suppose he would have found a place of shelter, but maybe not. Blossom, you dear fellow, if you had frozen to death I should have cried at your funeral."

Sally came in with an armful of wood and a shovelful of coals. A moment later, and there was a fire that made one warm to look at.

" Sally, tell Pat we girls want a sleighride," said Bessy.

" Yes, miss ; he'll be glad to take the horses out, I guess," said the girl.

" I want to have a splendid sleighride," said Bessy ; " and then I want to go to Nurse Dimple's, and buy her



out. Just think how she took in that sweet child, and cared for her. Let's carry just as much money as we can, and clear that old window. I'm rather tired of the candy and that doleful doll. There isn't much variety in ginger-cakes, but she will bake some fresh ones for new comers. How her old face will shine! and I mean to kiss her if I have a chance."

After breakfast, we had Pat in the parlor to talk about the ride. He thought the roads too heavy; and, after a little consideration, we agreed, that, as it would be moonlight and there was a chance of clear weather, we would wait till evening. Then Aunt Genevieve came down, and began so sweetly to apologize for grandy.

"I thought it was your voice, my dear; but mother was very nervous, and the housekeeper had irritated her in some way—and so you won't mind, will you?"

I could hardly answer, as I looked at her in the light of my newly acquired knowledge. Here was the woman that should have been Cousin Philip's wife, who might yet be—yes, who must be! Her patient eyes should smile again with happy thoughts, her lips be dumb and sealed no longer.

"You won't mind, will you?" I echoed the same words; for at that moment Blossom burst in, fresh from a run out of doors. Aunt Jenny gave a little cry, looking at me helplessly.

"Did you ever see such a splendid fellow!" cried Bessy. "He has come all the way from Ada's home. Nobody sent him. Isn't he a noble fellow?"

"He certainly is a beautiful dog; but—"



"Cousin Philip gave him to me," I ventured, stooping a little, and not daring to meet her eye, though I caught Bessy's. When I lifted my head, there was a faint color in Aunt Genevieve's cheek, and a peculiar expression in her glance.

"I was thinking of mother," she said; "it worries her to hear a dog bark."

"But he don't bark," said Bessy; "and I am sure if she can endure that horrible tortoise-shell cat she keeps up-stairs, she ought not to object to this splendid fellow. She needn't even know it."

"Very well, you must take the responsibility then," said Aunt Genevieve, half laughing; but I noticed that her fingers trembled when she patted Blossom on the head, and that he absolutely fawned upon her, like a great overgrown baby. That made me glad and pleased her.

An hour later, a message came for Bessy. Grandy wished her to come up-stairs.

"It makes me cold, girls. I've got a chill at the very thought. What can it be? She has found out about the dog, as sure as you live. Well, I must take the chances of war;" and Bessy threw off her apron and smoothed down her hair as she added: "I feel as if this court-martial was going to decide against me, and I'm almost sure I shall do something dreadful; I always do. If she gives me a scolding, I'll take the first train for home."

"Shall we escort you to the door?" asked Nanny.

"No; I'll face the peril by myself; but I'm very sure she's going to say that Blossom must be sent



away, or that we've all staid here long enough, or something equally hateful. Well, good-bye, girls; if you never see me again, remember that I died in a good cause;" and, so saying, Bessy dashed into the cold, gloomy hall. She went reluctantly up-stairs. The door was open. Bessy drew one long breath—she told me afterwards that it was like entering the cage of a royal Bengal tiger.

Presently she found herself face to face with her grandmother. The old lady sat by the window in her great armchair, enveloped in shawls, actually looking out upon the snow-covered landscape.

Bessy said that her heart was beating almost hard enough to be heard, but all that grandy said was,—

"Good-morning, my dear. I don't often send for you so early; but my poor old cat is sick, and Jenny told me you had some skill in doctoring animals."

Exactly what happened after this speech, Bessy never could remember; only, that, between laughing and trying not to laugh, she approached nearer to a fit of hysterics than she ever did in her life before, and that even Aunt Genevieve was frightened, and held the smelling-salts to her nose. The culmination came when grandy gravely asked her if she was subject to such attacks.

"I think—if I could go out in the air," said Bessy, convulsively,—“if you will excuse me for a minute or two—” and Nanny and I found her quite doubled up at the foot of the stairs, laughing, with the tears running down her cheeks.

“Girls, I can't stop! I can't get my breath. Shake



me, somebody ! What do you think she wanted ?” and then followed another interval of laughter. “ She — she — wanted — me — to — prescribe — for — a — sick — cat ; and I trembling with an awful fear that she was going to eat me up, or something of the sort.”

By this time, we had her in the parlor, where she dropped again ; and the contagion was irresistible. We sat down and laughed, too, while Blossom, in great anxiety, ran about, and poked his nose in our faces, each in turn. Of course we begged her to stop.

“ I can’t ; I can’t ! I shall see grandy’s face — and the old red window-curtain — and the snow — and the cat — there, I’ve done ;” and she threw up the rich, yellow plaits of hair that had fallen down, and pinned them in place, every now and then shaking with suppressed mirth.

“ What will grandy think ? She’ll think I’m subject to fits ; oh, dear, dear ! Well, on the whole it’s refreshing — a sort of shaking up. Give me my writing-desk, Nanny ; I’ll tell her to give poor Tibby some catnip. I thought everybody knew enough for that.”

In due course of time, the note was sent up-stairs, and Pat dispatched for the catnip. The day passed drearily enough. Pat guessed there wouldn’t be any letters till to-morrow : snow had delayed the trains, he said. We took Aunt Jenny into confidence concerning the sleighride. She thought it was all very well, if we could get off without making too much noise. We had all written letters, which we were to



drop in the grocery store, one corner of which was the post-office. Pat shoveled paths, and cleaned the sleigh ; and Mrs. Clute hunted up a couple of old foot-stoves, for the weather was very cold, though it was only the end of October.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

### A SLEIGHRIDE AND NURSE DIMPLE.

**A**T seven o'clock, Pat drew up to the side entrance with a superb pair of grays, the pride of grandy's heart. The Normandy horses were all blooded: it seemed almost a sin to put any of them before a plough.

The air was clear and cold, the sky a brilliant study, the moon came out calm and white; and I forgot all trouble as I listened to the even steps of the horses upon the road. Away we went, mile after mile, the white wonder of nature silvering mountain, forest, and valley, up hill and down; and, coming back, drew near the corner grocery, whose yellow light fell from windows and door, laying bars of shadow upon the trampled, snowy area in front.

Our letters deposited, "Head the horses for the 'deacon's relict,'" said Bessy.

"All right;" and Pat drew up there in good style, laughing.

We saw the widow's cap on the window-shade. First it looked sideways and twinkled, then it looked down, jumped up, and disappeared.

We girls all went in together, and asked for every thing we could think of from candy to cookies.

There was candy boiling inside, she said. Couldn't we go in and see her make it? Of course we could.



Once inside her tiny kitchen, we made ourselves at home. Bessy bought out the window, I bought out a basket full of mittens and aprons and miscellaneous things, and Nancy bought every bit of worsted there was in the shop. Meantime, the candy was done, pulled on a wooden pin, manufactured into lolypops. There was not much of it; and we instantly took the whole stock.

“I’ve always did for myself,” she said, growing confidential as we counted out the silver, “though the deacon left me forehanded; but you know we old New England folks believe in work. It saves a deal of rust, and keeps one hearty and happy.”

“And you have done for others, also,” said Bessy, giving her pretty head a knowing toss. “There was a little girl that came all the way from the old country; and, when her own cast her out, you took her in.”

“Ah! the dear lamb,” said Nurse Dimple, with a queer contraction of the firm little mouth; “she was as like that one yonder”—nodding at me—“as two peas. I saw the stage bring her, with the forlorn little hair trunk strapped on behind. It was an awful night that she came here. They’ve told me that they didn’t know it, up to the great house; and I guess they didn’t.

“‘I’ve come all the way from England,’ she said; ‘and you are my mother’s old nurse: and I pray you to take me in for a night or two; I can’t stay where they don’t want me.’

“Down on my knees I went. I saw it in her



blessed face, that she was Hatty Normandy's child, that poor beautiful creeter. And, when she told me they were both dead, mother and father—" here Nurse Dimple drew out a red silk handkerchief, and dried her eyes, and fumbled for her spectacles.

" Here's my Bible, dears," she continued, taking the much-worn volume from her table ; " that's where I writ her name, Etta Dimple ; for I took her for my own, and, if the Lord had pleased to let her stay with me, she'd been a-living now ; for it was coldness killed her, and she couldn't live, poor lamb, and know how her grandmother felt towards her."

" Mrs. Dimple, would you mind if I kissed you ?" asked Bessy, in a subdued voice.

" Kissed me ? laws, no, deary ; I've handled your father till he was a boy grown ; for I nursed all the Normandies. Come and kiss me, child."

So we all kissed her, and received a hug apiece ; and Nurse Dimple told me how pretty a child my own mamma was, and how gentle and obedient.

" Not to say the old lady hain't had heaps o' trouble," she added, after wiping her eyes again. " She did jest worship her handsome children ; and it was terrible to have 'em go agin her. Don't be too hard on her. You're young and high in spirits ; she's old and wore out. I know something what that is. I don't enjoy the warming-pan no more,—though I never used it myself, believing in hardness,—and two cups and saucers is more social than one, to say nothing of the pleasure of seeing a pretty face opposite. I wish I could 'a' kept her ; but the Lord's will be



done ! She's where there ain't no worriting, and in better keeping than mine."

"Isn't she the dearest old dear?" said Bessy, as we climbed into the sleigh, and Pat put our purchases in after us. "Now you see what a difference there is in grandmothers."

"Nurse Dimple never had a chick nor a child," put in Pat, sententiously.

"Well," said Bessy, lucidly, "she's somebody's grandmother—or, at least, she ought to be."

Our ride home was a merry one. Sally was in waiting, with the door open, and ready to take our wraps. The chairs, sofas, tables, were drawn around the fire, inside the great yellow silk screen ; and we gave Sally the most of our purchases, to her great delight.

"Pat, you're a jewel !" exclaimed Bessy, as that personage appeared with a loaded tray. "How did you know I was hungry?"

"I thought a bit of chicken and a salad would be refreshing after the work you've done this night, miss," said Pat, pulling at a lock of his red hair, and grinning.

"Shall we have letters to-morrow?"

"No doubt of it, miss."

"Because I'm expecting a large mail from China or Africa. You needn't laugh, Cousin Ada Stewart : when I'm at home, I live in China ; and, when I'm at Uncle Will's, I consider myself in Africa. Both of them are awfully benighted places. Where is Blossom?"

"Sure, I haven't seen him," said Pat.



“Did he go out when we started for our sleighride, girls? did anybody notice, I wonder?” I asked.

No, nobody had noticed; even I at that moment had been thoughtless enough to forget Blossom.

We looked through the hall; Pat, as he went out to take care of the horses, searched carefully in the yard and on the premises: but no Blossom was to be found. We could all remember when we had seen him last—just before tea.

“Blossom just paid you a visit, like a genteel, well-bred dog,” said Bessy; “and he has gone back to see Cousin Philip, and whisper a word in his ear, instead of the traditional little bird,” she ran on. “I’m very sorry; it was delightful to feel that he stood between us and danger: but don’t worry, Cousin Ada; he’ll return to his first love.”



## CHAPTER XXX.

### BRIDGET'S LETTER FROM HOLLYHOXY.

**I**N the morning, Pat met us with a most terrific leer. Evidently something of prime importance had happened ; but he waited to be questioned. As usual, Bessy was the first speaker.

“ You all look like a funeral here,” she said, over her smoking chocolate. “ Mrs. Clute, more hot milk, if you please ; you know I like it the color of rich cream. Well, Pat, what is it ? ”

“ Sure, an' it's loike to have a funeral we might 'a' been,” said Pat, solemnly. “ If it hadn't 'a' been for your dog, the Lord knows who'd 'a' been alive this morning.”

I started from my seat.

“ Then you found Blossom ? ”

“ Kape cool, Miss Stewart, if you plaze,” he said, with exasperating dignity ; “ Blossom was in the house all night.”

“ Where, pray ? ”

“ Guarding a prisoner, sure, good luck to him ! ”

We all looked stupidly across the table to where Pat stood, his visage a perplexity as unsolvable as his language.

“ Why don't ye tell it out in plain English, boy ? ” queried Mrs. Clute, turning round from the tray on which smoked coffee, tea, and chocolate. “ The fact



is the man's head is turned; and it's hardly a wonder, for no bugglar did ever I think to git through a keyhole, yet this one did."

"Burglars!" cried Bessy; "if they get into this house we are lost, for there isn't a key that will fit our door. Pat, go get a locksmith directly. You don't mean to say a burglar got in here!"

"Well, not edjactly a burglar, miss," put in Pat, anxious not to be defrauded of his share of the discovery; "and we can't find out however it was. It was Mad Jack, from the workhouse a mile away; and bad enough he is, as well as mad. I'd gone to the woodhouse this morning, and come in, whin I thought I heered a growl. Thinks I to mysilf, 'That's the dog; an' he's come back afore he's gone away, sure.' So I follered the sound; and, out through the wing, in the summer kitchen, I come upon Mad Jack, sure, wid a wound or two, an' the dog jist kaping guard over him, as loikely enough he'd been doing that same all the night through. The poor beastie didn't come off widout a little blood-letting, neidther."

"Oh, then Blossom is hurt!"

"It's on'y a thrifle, miss; an' I fixed him up wid a plaister o' liniment. He's not hurt bad at all, as you'll see. Faix, an' the poor crater—the man—begged jist piteous to be let away; but I wasn't such a fool. Ses I, 'Howld on, me good fellow!'—to the dog;—'doan't ye take yer eyes offon him till I come back;' an' howld on he did till I took horse and got the authorities, an' by this time the rascal's at headquarters, bad luck to him! He'd always a dislike to th' ould mistress be-



cause she sint his son to the school for reformers, or somethin' sich ; an' I make no doubt there'd 'a' been throuble afore mornin', if it hadn't been for that gintleman of a dog, good luck to *him* !”

“ Dear old Blossom !” I said, from my full heart.

“ Well, here is a sensation !” said Bessy ; “ we have slept all night with a madman in the house. How did he get in ?”

“ That's what I've asked myself a hundred times,” said Mrs. Clute, with a preternaturally solemn visage. “ Could he widen the cracks or stretch the keyholes, I'd not wonder at all ; but it's the chimney he must 'a' come down, or else digged under the foundations of the house.”

Nancy suggested that he might have slipped in while we were going out for the sleighride ; but Mrs. Clute protested, that she had stood by the door all the time, and not a soul had entered.

“ Lots of souls might enter,” said Bessy ; “ you couldn't stop them. What do you think, girls—should Aunt Genevieve be told ?”

“ Not for worlds, my dears,” said Mrs. Clute. “ I'll take the responsibility of holding my tongue.”

“ I wish you would take the responsibility of holding mine,” said Bessy. “ It's too much for me ; it's beginning to itch this minute. Such a romantic, awful, dangerous thing, and not be allowed to tell it ! Well, what shall we give Blossom ? He ought to have a collar of gold at the least, and he shall.”

“ With our three names engraved upon it,” said Nanny.



“Exactly: there won’t be any danger of Cousin Ada’s forgetting us while Blossom lives. And we’ve got a rod to hold over grandy too. If she objects to the dog, we’ll prove triumphantly that she owes her life to him. I should like to see her turn him out of doors then.”

“Where is Blossom, Pat?” I asked, rising in all the pride of possession. Pat went out in the hall; and Blossom was presently in our midst, and received our congratulations very modestly, only there was a wound on his chest that he seemed anxious to dispense with.

The postman’s bell sent us all into the great hall. Never was sight more welcome than the fur cap, Roman nose, and red-mittened fingers of Ezekiel Post, rightly named.

Three letters for me; and as many for Bessy and Nanny. Have you ever seen three happy girls with their hands full of news from home, and their hearts beating high with anticipation? The bouyancy of youth, how it overleaps all contingences and overlooks all trial! I pored over every envelope, reading them three or four times.

That is from Cousin Philip; here Bridget’s laboriously composed “litter.” Dear, honest heart, what did I care that she wrote me, “Adjeline Stewit,” and commenced it with a “Deer gull”!

The other letter—I turned it over and over. The bold, finely cut letters, the large, strong hand! Had Doctor Henry really taken the pains to bestow any time and thought on the poor girl, who, in her distraction, first found help in his counsels? (14)



“Now let’s hold a Quaker meeting,” said Bessy, “the first one who speaks to pay a fine of ten cents—I mean before the letters are read through. I have a healthy conviction that my pocket-book will be the first one called on,” she added, *sotto voce*; and so it was.

I confess that I opened Bridget’s letter with some trepidation; but, before I had read many lines, I felt the tears running down my cheeks.

“Now the Maister be gon,” she wrote, “It’s You as we misses more and more. There be a goanness in the house as there be in the Stummak when One don’t be getting Reglar food. Mrs. Davis, she Be puttin on Airs with her Best gowns every day. She do wear her Hair so High, a lot of fals kirls, and acts alreddy like the Lady of the House, wich she Be wishing to Be, I don’t Dout. Mr. Stewit give me some Gold pieces before He went, wich sorrowful He looked, poor Man, and that women Shewed her good sense, wich I will Say that For her, in staying away till He had Gone. I Herd she met Him at the Raleway-station, but Doant Know. Any Rate, She is Back; and She has taken your Room, and I haven’t No patience. Deer Child, Go to the Lord. I had a Dreme; and I thought that Mr. Stewit and Miss Marthy stood on a High hill. And Thare was a Thunder-storm, and they stood with Their Hands joined together. And the Storm grew worse; and a great Angel with Red wings Held the Litening like a two-Edged sword, and he Brought it down Betwene them. And, when I looked Again, there wasn’t nobody but The master Thare.



“Now, Thare is Signs. My mother was a grate Dremer, and what She dremed come true. And you rede in the Bible that men and women dremed—and ain't That enuff? I Beleve my dreme Will come true, and Marthy Voles will Never be mistress of Holly-hoxy.”

Poor Bridget made a great mess of that last word. She went on to say, that my Cousin Philip came over quite often, and sometimes played on the piano, and he and her husband had replenished the hot-house,—that the minister had been there to see Mrs. Davis, and that that lady had high words and was very cross for a day or two afterwards,—that Martha Voles had a friend visiting her, and was making up piles of cotton stuff and seeing the dressmaker three days out of four,—that she had her meals carried up to her in the morning,—and that Mrs. Davis waited upon her like a slave,—and that it was her opinion the housekeeper had known her a good deal longer than I had.

“Nanny, it's too bad! we've got to stay here all winter; and that when I had just been laying plans to take Cousin Ada Stewart back with me to China, and had made such a match!”

“Ten cents, if you please,” said Nancy, without thinking, holding out her hand. I held my hand out silently.

“See what a sly little puss she is!” said Bessy, laughing. “You'll get no ten cents out of her. Put your letter down a moment, Cousin Ada Stewart, while you listen to my doleful story; for I must talk. Papa is going to the mines, having received some



wonderfully good news about them ; and mamma will take the opportunity to go and visit Aunt Gunness in Indiana, I believe. She never pays me the compliment of asking me if I will go, but presumes I shall be very happy here. By this time, she is off on her journey, leaving those five precious boys to take care of themselves."

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Nancy.

"Why, I have no choice in the matter ; and the unkindest cut of all is, that the boys don't want me. So here we must stay—no concerts, no parties, no new dresses : I think it's awfully mean. Promise me,"—she appealed to Nancy, in a fit of the heroics, going down on her knees,—“that you will stay as long as I do.”

"Why, of course I will," said matter-of-fact Nancy.

"That relieves my mind. Nanny, we'll improve the time. Maybe it will do us good. We'll go home so changed that our most intimate friends won't know us. We'll renounce the pomps and vanities, for a season at least ; and I'll go hunt up a Sunday-school class. You needn't laugh ; I mean it. It will not hurt either of us to take a class. Poor Mr. Harrison made such an appeal to us last Sunday, that I almost decided then ; but I'm so afraid I shall make the children laugh."

"Is laughing such a deadly sin ?" asked Nancy.

"Well, it might be," said Bessy. "It depends, I suppose, upon what one is laughing at."



## CHAPTER XXXI.

### PEARLS GLEANED FROM A LETTER.

**B**Y this time, I had come to Cousin Philip's letter. He said he had advertised for Blossom, and hoped I had received the paper. He would soon know that I had found Blossom; and I fancied I could see his sunny smile at the news.

"Every thing seems going on very well at Holly-hoxy," he wrote. "Your father went off in better spirits than I have seen him for some time. He was very cordial towards me, and seemed his noble self again. I ventured to speak to him upon a certain matter; and, though he said little, I could see that his mind is materially enlightened since I last talked with him.

"I have since learned that he went, the day before he left, to your mother's grave with a basket of fragrant flowers. The cemetery keeper told me about it;—for he also has heard the now current rumor;—and he said that your father was there a full hour."

I could not help kissing the lines that filled me with a new hope.

"Mrs. Davis I have seen once or twice. She is very guarded, both in speech and behavior," continued the letter. "Martha Voles went to church last Sunday, and was no doubt commented upon freely. It seems that she is trying to gain a footing in soci-



ety ; but people stand aloof. It is a pity that she should put herself in this trying and painful position. I took the liberty to hint to Mrs. Davis that it would be better taste for herself and Martha to move elsewhere, but made her very angry. Since then I have not seen her, and have not cared to.

“I hope your father has made choice of an honest and conscientious man for his agent ; but my mind misgives me in that particular. Mr. Clewes, it seems to me, is quite as much inclined to act the master, as Miss Martha Voles is the mistress, of Hollyhoxy. He is in town much of his time ; and I have heard his horse’s hoofs—he uses Trixy—on the road as late as two o’clock in the morning. In appearance, he is a gentleman ; but I fear his habits are not as polished as he would give us to believe.

“I hate to have such thoughts about people ;—it seems like debasing one’s self to speculate upon the foibles and follies of others ;—but then, what can be done ? I dare not avoid it. I must keep an eye on Hollyhoxy for your sake. It is looking very lovely, just touched by autumnal frosts.

“I have called once or twice to see your little *protégé*, Polly ; and the child seemed very grateful. She is now in full possession of her faculties again, but fading as a lily might fade. There is no hope of her life ; and her parents have come to see that it is for the best, and are quite reconciled.

“Try to call to your mind a little episode that occurred during one of my visits to the house. You remember the coming of a poor sick man, whom Mrs.



Davis treated with great indignity, and charged with insanity? He is now so ill that he is confined to a room in the hospital of the poorhouse; and Mrs. Davis is certainly anxious for his well doing, for some reason of her own. Every day, and sometimes twice a day, she visits him; and she has hired a nurse on purpose to attend him. Doctor Henry has twice been sent for, and twice been refused admission. He has no doubt but that the sick man is anxious to see him, but that his nurse and Mrs. Davis are determined that he shall not be admitted. This is very cruel, and the doctor feels it painfully. But he is always on the watch; and, if the poor man does not die in the interim, I am quite sure he will see him yet. That there is some mystery connected with him, I have always thought.

“I am looking with great interest for your letter, which will reach me by to-night’s mail. Meantime, I shall send this one immediately, knowing how sweet is news from home. I am so sorry about Blossom! I heard from one of our teamsters, that such a dog was seen some ten miles west of this. Can it be that Blossom is on his way to find you? Can he do it? I doubt it, though I have heard wonderful stories of the sagacity of superior dogs. I send you a paper containing an advertisement for the runaway. Keep up your heart; and, no matter what you have written me, write me a good long letter, about *everybody you see*, and of all your goings-on, which I can imagine—three girls together—are none of the gravest.

“A week from next Wednesday is Hallowe’en, the



31st of October. I shall think of my little cousin and our merry last year's Hallowe'en fun."

"There is no disappointment in *your* letter, Cousin Ada Stewart; I can see it in your face," said Bessy.

I shook my head.

"No; this letter is from Cousin Philip," I said.

"What a paragon Cousin Philip must be! I believe I am getting to hate him," laughed Bessy. "I don't like your goody-good men, anyway."

"He is not 'goody good,' as you mean it, perhaps," I made haste to reply, "unless you mean a wholesome, good, cleanly life. Cousin Philip is as full of fun as anybody ought to be; and yet he is always thinking of others. He writes pamphlets for the people, and gives them away. He lectures on health, dietetics, and mechanics, as well as the Holy Land and 'Sights I Have Seen in Europe.' And he plays on the flute and violin to perfection. I have heard that he might become a master on either."

"Bless me!" said Bessy, "we must bring about a reconciliation with grandy immediately, if not sooner. I should so dearly love to call him Uncle Philip, and see that dear little soft-eyed woman happy! But my purse will soon be depleted if I keep talking on. I see you have not read all your letters yet. I *should* like to know who writes such a splendid hand!"

"Oh this is from Doctor Henry," I said, also admiring the firm, well-curved letters; and I opened the envelope with a feeling akin to reverence. Will my reader allow me to place some of the beautiful words which dropped from his pen, here upon these pages?



“ If we never seek our place in life, we shall never find it. It grows up to us as we grow into it.

“ Life wants no grander jewel for its crown than the noble sentiment of the nobler fact, ‘ I have glorified Thee on the earth ; I have finished the work Thou hast given me to do.’

“ While many a one is thinking what he would do if he had the means, or what he would like to do under certain conditions, others are using what they have got to use, no matter how small, and making the best of that ; and thus, like their Master, are glorifying God upon the earth.

“ It is pitiful to see how many there are sighing over the wish to know what they were put into the world for, with the wish ever ungranted because there is no real depth to their desires, only a morbid sentimentality born of selfishness.

“ There is no shorter or more eventful truth than this : ‘ *He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.*’ The life of faith in God must be *intense* ; then the false charm of the world will be counteracted.”

And, in speaking of the higher life as not being the life of asceticism, he says :—

“ Christianity has been abased by its friends. The glorious life of the Son of God was not the austere asceticism of a hermit. He saw a living beauty in every thing that had life. He made all the tones and chords of nature sound with the grandest vibrations and most exalted harmonies. He spoke of the stones as crying aloud. He talked to the fig-tree ; He apo-



theosized the lily of the field : all nature to him was capable of being Godlike, and He would see it perfect—the sick made well, the lame, dumb, and blind restored. Whenever He was allowed by the souls that surrounded Him, He reclaimed and beautified and reformed ; never ignored, never oppressed.

“ The new creature in Christ feels a new love for the world, a higher, holier passion, because he sees it through the eyes of Divinity.

“ The world, with its higher pleasures and nobler scenes, is not to be frowned down and despised by the Christian because others abuse what is clean and beautiful, and so, in effect, rob him of a part of his right to glean in the harvest of God’s great universe.”



## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A NARROW ESCAPE.

“**I** SAY, girls, do for mercy’s sake wake up!”

“Why, what is the matter?” asked Nancy, in a sleepy voice; and I, who had been awake for some time, thought I could dimly discern a white figure sitting up in the other bed.

“Matter! why, it’s most morning and as dark as pitch,” said Bessy, dolefully. “I always was a coward in the dark; I confess it with tears. If the candle was lighted, you would see great stains on my face.”

“Shall I light the candle?” I asked; but I was really out of bed, groping for a match.

“You dear little unselfish thing!—yes, if you please. I’ve just been hearing doors shut, and boards creak, and footsteps moving about, ever since the clock struck four, almost an hour ago. I’ve seen a burglar standing right by my pillow, and couldn’t get up the heroics at all. See here!”

We burst out laughing as soon as the candle was lighted, shivering though we were. Bessy had taken from under her pillow the most enormous, the forlornest, rustiest, mightiest old horse-pistol I ever saw in my life.

“And it hasn’t had any powder in it for forty years, I suppose; but I thought, if anybody did get in, I



could just show that I was prepared ; yet, if you'll believe me, when I felt as if there might be a thief in the room, I caught the cold shivers, and I couldn't carry my hand to my pillow to save my life. I didn't know I could be so nervous."

Any thing more utterly ludicrous than Bessy at that moment could hardly have been imagined. I had just popped into bed again, still laughing, when I felt as if something struck me on the head.

The pistol was loaded ; it had gone off.

I fell back, a little stunned. Blossom's furious barking and Bessy's screams brought me to my senses.

"Oh, just let me die, too, dear Lord ! please don't let me live another moment !" moaned the frightened girl. "As true as I live, dear God, I didn't mean it ; you know I didn't mean it !"

By this time, the door was shaken furiously ; for, what with the report of the old blunderbuss, the screaming, and Blossom's frantic noise, it was a little pandemonium for the time being. Nancy, crying silently, opened the door. Mrs. Clute and Aunt Genevieve rushed in.

"I've killed her, Aunt Jenny ! I shall never know a moment's peace again as long as I live !" and the poor girl was growing hysterical.

"Killed whom ? not me," I cried, gathering all my strength. "I'm not killed, Bessy. I guess it struck somewhere near me though."

By this time, Bessy had me round the neck, and Blossom resented it by rolling over both of us, in his frantic endeavor to get at the facts.



“What was it?” asked Aunt Jenny, her voice trembling. “I was so glad it didn’t wake mother. What a frightful noise!”

Bessy explained, now sobbing, now laughing. We heard Pat, outside the door, expressing his astonishment by clicking his tongue against his teeth.

“See,” said Nancy, who had been searching with the candle, “there’s the ball right above her head—almost in a line—in the headboard.”

“My blessed child!” cried Aunt Genevieve, bursting into tears; “what a merciful, what an almost miraculous, escape!”

“I think it struck the little comb, and that was what hurt me,” I said. “My hair fell down when I got out to light the candle; and I put it up with this—see?” I picked the comb up from the pillow,—or rather the fragments of what had been one,—and again Bessy hugged me, speechless.

“I certainly will live a different life after this; I certainly will,” she said, presently, with hard, dry sobs. “Suppose I had killed you! and only one little half-inch lower would have done it. I couldn’t have lived; I wouldn’t. But now! I shall bless God every day of my life, that His hand guided that ball.”

“‘All’s well that ends well,’ ” I said, sinking back on my pillow; for I felt a little faint. Aunt Genevieve went out, and came in again in a few moments with some restorative, which she made me swallow; and then she turned her attention to Bessy, who was now in a raging fever.



“Never mind me ; I deserve to suffer,” she said, with chattering teeth.

“My poor little darling!” and Aunt Genevieve kissed her tenderly. “Just think how good God is, and don’t write bitter things against yourself.”

“But think how wickedly careless of me, Aunt Jenny !”

“It was careless, my child ; but it has been a lesson to you that you will never forget.”

“Forget !” said Bessy, with an emphasis and intonation I am likely to remember as long as I live ; “I shall spend all eternity thanking God that I am not a murderer.”

“Sure,” we heard Pat say to Mrs. Clute, outside the door, “if I’d ’a’ dramed what was coming, I wouldn’t ’a’ loaded the ould thing ; but, ye see, I thought it would be at laste respectable to have some sort o’ fire-arms in ridiness. Who’d ’a’ shuspected that mad-cap ’d ’a’ found it? an’ she wid it unther her pillow all night ! It’s moighty lucky it didn’t go off of itself, which it’s ould and exparienced enough to do.”

All that day, Bessy was very quiet and very tender towards me. It was as if she had done me a personal injury which I had forgiven.

“I feel differently from what I ever did in my life,” she said,—“as if some great mercy had been vouchsafed to me as a special favor from God. I never connected eternity with any thing I have done before. After this, do you suppose I shall look at *every thing* in the light of eternity?”

“I suppose we ought,” I said ; “isn’t eternity what we live for and prepare for, if we live as we should?”



Whatever Bessy said that day carried weight with it. I was astonished that one with so light a heart and merry a tongue could have thought as deeply as she must have done, though on the surface apparently regardless of reason. And I could busy myself about few of my own customary duties. It seemed as if all I had to do that day was to be grateful. I had passed through a great peril. I had known, for one brief second, what it was to feel that the time was drawing near,—that I was going to change things visible for things invisible ; or, rather, I should say, in Bible language, for the things not seen, which are eternal, the things seen being temporal. Hitherto, in my childish folly, at the first touch of affliction I had shrank from life ;—which seemed to my unformed imagination valueless ;—now it spread before me like the map of some great, undiscovered country, full of marvels, attainments, golden opportunities and industries, rich with mines of unexplored thought, bright with visions of anticipated usefulness. Oh ! I was glad that I had been born, even though to a heritage not unmixed with trouble. I began to see that life lived selfishly is a curse ; but that giving sympathy, love, help, hope, to others makes one grow grandly strong, fits one for great things in the hereafter. I now, for the first time, began truly to live the “life beautiful,” and looked about me on every occasion practicable to find something to do for God.

Nancy, who was one of the passive souls, always ready to do whatever her hands found to do, always submitting with cheerfulness, always looking on the



bright side,—was, by the natural sweetness of her temper and disposition, a help to both of us. She, sweet soul, would never have many thorns in her path; for, by some wonderful alchemy, she transformed them to roses.

So we three sought constantly for work to do for Jesus. Happy work we found always; for our hearts went with our hands. How many hours we spent hunting for little neglected children, and fitting them out for the Sunday-school! In all my life, I have seen nothing sweeter than the love of a teacher drawing human souls to Jesus.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### HALLOWE'EN.

SOMEWAY, we were all very quietly happy now ; for we had actually settled down for the winter. We expected to enjoy ourselves. If outsiders came, let them come and be happy with us. There were pictures, games, reading, and singing ; for grandy had never interfered with our musical pleasures after that first night. I was still in disgrace ; that is, grandy had never sent for me, and, as it appeared, was not likely to send for me all winter. Aunt Genevieve apologized for a time, and then seemed to give it up ; but she was more demonstrative towards me, and I grew to love her very dearly for her own as well as my dead mother's sake.

“ Girls, do you know what day it is ? ” said Bessy, as we took our usual seats in front of the parlor fire, with our work and books. I had a basket full of wools, and several little squares of canvas, on each of which I was beginning a lesson. We had formed a sewing-class for the poorest children in the neighborhood ; and, every Wednesday afternoon, the little girls came to learn how to do worsted work, to embroider, to make button-holes, and to knit. A pretty sight it was ; for Mrs. Clute—who entered into the arrangement to the extent of making delicious honey-cakes and preparing a great dish full of nuts, with



which to fill the children's hands when they left—had given up her comfortable room for such occasions. Sometimes there were twenty little girls, with here and there a boy sprinkled in to please Bessy, who had her theories on the subject of buttons and stocking-heels; and it was a pretty sight, that drove for the time all anxious thought from my mind. Blossom was always in our midst; and the children were delighted with his beauty and good spirits.

We had but just inaugurated the school, however, at the time I mention.

I thought of Cousin Philip. Yes, it was Hallowe'en. Ever since I could remember, I had celebrated Hallowe'en; now, here we were in the country, a heavy snowstorm blocking up the roads, and no festivity in preparation.

We discussed refreshments, tableaux, readings. Finally it was decided to hold a reception, and invite, in due form, Aunt Genevieve, Mrs. Clute, Pat, Bessy, and a young cousin who had lately been admitted as an errand girl to Ruby Hall. Instantly changing our occupation, we were soon busy with our pens; and each inmate of the house received an invitation on the very best gilt-edged note-paper. I practiced several of my choicest songs; and Bessy tried her memory by repeating two or three choice selected pieces, albeit in rather a droning manner.

"Did you ever try tricks?" asked Bessy, when, every thing arranged, we had grown silent again.

"What sort of tricks?" asked I, while Nanny laughed quietly.



“ Oh, there are lots of them. You eat salt, and throw Indian-meal pellets in water, and go out at midnight and take up the first stalk you find, and—”

“ But what is it all for ?”

“ Well, if the stalk is straight and handsome, your future husband will be a fine-looking man ; and, if plenty of earth adheres to the roots, why, there's plenty of money in store for you. I used to think they were grand ; but they look silly to me now, after our last year's experience, eh, Nanny ?”

Nanny shook her head, still laughing.

“ You see, we had a full house last year : there were thirty of us all told—aunts and cousins and second cousins, and some who were old friends. All the boys were here,—I mean of my own particular family,—and four of us girls—Nancy and I ; Frank Warren, Nancy's half-sister ; and Ethel Merrill, a more distant relation. We had decided, each one, to take a mirror, and walk backwards down-stairs at twelve o'clock at night, with a lighted candle. Of course, we were to see at that witching hour the faces of our intended bridegrooms. Very well, we chose the back-kitchen stairs for the theatre of our little drama ; and, as we moved along the old hall towards them, I think we were all heartily ashamed of ourselves. I shall never forget how, at one particular point, the moonlight, coming through a half-open shutter, gave each a view of the other's white face.

“ Of course we all wished ourselves back in our snug, fire-lighted room ; and of course we wouldn't go back. We were bound to see the thing to the bitter end ; and we did.



“The stairs, as you know, are very steep ; and you may fancy us going down backwards. As was natural, I tittered : when was there ever an occasion for fun that I didn’t titter ? And, to crown the whole, we had utterly forgotten the rhyme that ought to be said. For my life, I couldn’t think of any thing but ‘Now I lay me.’

“Presently, Nancy remembered it before we were half way down ; and we repeated it in a low voice, with considerable composure, when Nanny’s foot caught in a fold of her dress, and, presto ! she tumbled against us, and we all went clattering to the bottom together, and lay there in a heap, as dismal a conglomeration as you can possibly imagine.

“‘Every bone of my body is broken !’ groaned Nanny, after a dreadful silence.

“‘I don’t know whether it’s my neck or my back,’ said Frank.

“‘And I can’t move,’ half sobbed Ethel, who was a poor, wee mite of a thing.

“‘Well, if you can’t move,’ said I, extricating my head,—for I was half smothered,—“somebody else can ; for I hear footsteps.’

“‘Serves us right for being such fools,’ said Frank ; but, nevertheless, she managed to find the great bolt inside, and drew it.

“Nanny declared she could not move, and begged us not to leave her ; and, indeed, we were too much frightened to stir a finger, for a voice right at the door cried out,—

“‘Who’s tharre ?’



“Of course it was Pat ; we had no other watch-dog in the house.

“Dead silence.

“‘It’s moighty still ye are jist now ; but, by St. Patrick, I heard a noise, an’ ’twas on these back stairs too ! An’ there’s the bolt drawn,’ he added : ‘ ’twasn’t drawed half an hour ago on the inside of it.’

“We could hear him apply his ear to the keyhole ; but we remained perfectly still.

“‘I’ll fetch ’em,’ said Pat, with a sort of growl.

“‘O Bessy, drag me up-stairs,’ said Nancy ; ‘I’m fainting.’

“‘Any one who faints at this juncture,’ said I, ‘is not worthy the name of woman. Now is your opportunity to prove heroic.’ At the same time, I was getting ready to run.

“‘Perhaps he has given it up,’ said Kate. ‘But, no ; it isn’t like Pat to give up.’

“The steps came again.

“‘O Bessy, if those boys get hold of this !’ she said, a moment after.

“Just then there was a click.

“‘Ef you don’t git out o’ there,’ roared Pat, ‘you’re a dead man. One, two,—’

“‘Pat, don’t you dare to fire !’ said I, forgetting all caution.

“‘Don’t I *dare*, is it ? Sure, I won’t thin, Miss Bessy,’ said that audacious Pat. ‘I’d forgot what night it was ;’ and we heard him laughing to himself louder and louder. Oh, if ever I wanted to box a pair of ears, first one and then the other, it surely was then.



“ ‘Pat,’ said I, ‘we’re all here.’

“ ‘Sure, that’s what I mistrusted,’ he muttered, still laughing.

“ ‘And you see we’re quite at your mercy.’

“ ‘Marcy, is it?’ said he; ‘ouch! I’ll be marci-ful.’

“ ‘And you won’t tell on us, will you, Pat?’ said I, raging internally, but speaking like silk velvet.

“ ‘Surely not, if it bees your wish, Miss Bessy;’ and Pat doubled himself up,—I know he did as well as if I had seen him,—and laughed till he cried.

“ ‘As for us,’ continued Bessy, looking over at Nanny, whom I had never seen in such convulsions of mirth, “we crawled up-stairs the best we could; and I don’t think Nanny walked without a limp for a month afterwards; did you, Nanny? Oh, bless me! I forgot the mirrors. I’d like not to have told you that part. We left them behind, and Kate and I volunteered to go back for them. Imagine our consternation, when we opened the door on the upper landing, to see Pat leisurely unwrapping them.

“ ‘Pat,’ I cried, wrathfully, ‘that’s our property!’

“ ‘Yes, miss,’ said Pat, shaking; ‘I was wondering how they come here;’ and he came up-stairs, and gave them to me. If you’ll believe me, the only glass he had unwrapped was his own picture, painted by—me! in no very flattering colors.”

“ ‘O Bessy!’ I said; and the expression of her face and her gesture, as she said “me,” pointing to herself, upset my gravity.

“ ‘Well, you see I did it for fun; it was to fall to



Kate's lot. But wasn't I well punished?" continued Bessy. "If Pat hadn't been a gentleman by nature, he never would have forgiven me; for, while the likeness was perfect, the details verged on the grotesque. I can tell you my cheeks blazed whenever I met Pat, for a long time after that. As for Kate, she was the maddest girl I ever saw, for a week. Kate's no angel, is she, Nanny? You see they hadn't any idea I had really put faces inside the mirrors; but I had, in each one of them."

"Mine was a Russian bear," said Nancy; "and Ethel's a Skye terrier, with the fluffiest face imaginable; and, as it was very like a certain gentleman friend of hers, why, the effect was striking."

"More striking than imposing," said Bessy. "I don't believe Ethel ever quite forgave me; but I still think, if we had carried it out and hadn't made such a miserable failure, we should have enjoyed the joke tolerably."

"And what was there in yours?" I asked.

"Oh, there wasn't any thing in mine but my own face, when I looked in it. By the way,"—and she took a letter from her pocket,—“I got a short and sweet note from my brothers to-day. They have not forgotten last Hallowe'en. They heard the noise, you see, and guessed out the rest. If we didn't have to mask our faces all the next day! They declared the house was haunted, and then each one gave his version of the noises he heard. It was at the breakfast table, too, mind you; and there was Pat, most ominously solemn, waiting upon table; and, whenever he



looked our way, I didn't know whether I should faint or scream, for there was an unmistakable expression in those funny eyes of his. And poor Kate! you could have lighted a candle at her cheeks. Well, well, all those wild, wicked days are over. I never want to try tricks again."

"But what of your letter, dear?" asked Nanny.

"Oh! here it is.

"*'THOU BESS OF MANY BROTHERS:—*

*'We shall pour down on Ruby Hall like a deluge about the 20th of December—Christmas time. We shall come in shooting-coats and carpet-bags. Say to grandy I'm dying to see her: that's a phrase the young ladies use. Tell Pat to polish up the old sleigh, likewise the gray horses. We intend to spend a whole jolly week.'*

"I'm so glad!" said Bessy; "for I want you to see them, Cousin Ada Stewart, and I particularly want them to see you. As for grandy, she will be at her best; for she is very fond of her grandsons. But I forgot"—and she grew grave—"you have not even seen grandy yet. It would be rather awkward if she should come down-stairs, and be introduced as a stranger to you."

I smiled at the idea; but, nevertheless, it troubled me. "Did grandy ever come down-stairs?" I asked; and was told that she sometimes did on great occasions.



## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### A NEW ROLE FOR AUNT GENEVIEVE.

OUR reception was a success. Pat helped us decorate the room with evergreen and lights. My cousins came down in wonderful dresses, that quite put to shame my plain gray silk ; but then, they were both to assume a variety of attitudes inside of an enormous frame, which Mrs. Clute had found for us in the garret, and which once had held a life-size picture of Grandfather Normandy. We had found an old harp, and strung it with twine. In the shadow at the further end of the room, it looked very well. I was to be the performer ; and an idea took possession of me. I had brought my beautiful party dress ; and, when the time should come for me to be presented, I intended to excuse myself, go up-stairs, put on my splendid array, and, under cover of the great screen, return and be posed.

Our audience was neither very large nor very select ; but it was the most delighted little group of listeners I ever saw. Their quaint expressions, their homely applause, their frequent bursts of laughter more hearty than elegant, really repaid us for all our trouble.

While Bessy was reading "Our Hero has Come Back," I carried out my part of the programme, and took them all by storm. Poor little Aunt Genevieve cried ;—for of course she remembered her sister's wedding-dress ;—and my triumph was complete.



“Slyboots,” whispered Bessy, when the “GENIUS OF MUSIC” had descended from her pedestal, “you looked just too beautiful for any thing real. If you could only have heard Sally! ‘Jemima!’ cried she, in a sharp voice, ‘that’s a picture; you needn’t tell me that’s a real flesh-and-blood critter.’ The ‘critter’ will now take the music-stool,” she added, *sotto voce*; “and remember, no Scotch songs.”

“I’ll never forgit this evening, miss,” said Pat. “Sure, it’s yersilf looks like thim angels floatin’ on clouds, as I saw once in the catheredral; and I jist bow to you, as I did to thim.”

“Young ladies,” said Mrs. Clute, solemnly, “in the name of the kitchen and the housekeeper’s parlor, I thank you for this kind deception; and, if ever you have another, may I be there to see!”

“Maybe ye don’t know,” said Pat, with a slow grimace, “that we belong to the *hire* classes;” and, with this quiet pun, he left.

The next day, we went to church through the snow, and came home to find the house swarming with visitors. They were old-time friends of the Normandies, up from Boston; and I understood that grandy received them in great state. She liked a house full. Nothing pleased her better than chance company. It was her boast, that, no matter how many visitors came, or at what season or hour, they never found her unprepared. So it was now. The good cheer in that kitchen made every shelf and table groan. The housekeeper was quite equal to the occasion; Pat in his element as chief butler; and Sally, with her red-



armed assistant, proved that she had not been trained in a New England kitchen in vain.

For two days, there was no solitude except in the mighty, rough-raftered room at the top of the house, which I had entered two or three times with fear and trembling. It was there, in an old herb-smelling box, I had found "BUNYAN'S PILGRIM'S PROGRESS," which I read with unstinted delight, and which opened up a new field of thought for me. Not a picture of that book beautiful but I can recall to-day; not a step that "Christian" took but I can follow him. Thank God, that, in my youth, I became acquainted with that grand creation,—that, while my mind was unsullied, fiction presented itself to me in its rarest, purest form!

When the company had gone, we came down to our own calm level again. Sometimes a young gentleman belonging in the neighborhood would stray in; but they were all farming people, and had, no doubt, a wholesome contempt for us city folk. Poor Seth had never ventured up to Ruby Hall since Bessy's spirited reply to his letter; and, indeed, we could very well dispense with male company, since we were expecting Bessy's five brothers, and making all our plans with reference to them.

"Do you manage them, I wonder," I asked one day when we were talking about them, "or do they manage you?"

Bessy laughed: a tender, musical little laugh it was.

"I can answer that question," said Nancy, who



was winding wool. "My lady has them at her feet all the time, like the tyrannical princess in the fairy story. She is, in a way, more of a tyrant than grandy herself. One runs for a shawl, another carries her sunshade; and she has only to half express a wish, presto! it is gratified. I have known her to have five boxes of gloves at a time,—I've seen them myself,—and such an amount of pin-money! As for jewels and pretty things, I've no doubt she might set up a bazar with the stock she has on hand. My private opinion is, that her extraordinary modesty in dress and ornaments, for which grandy once praised her, is due, not so much to her high moral qualities, as to the fact that she had an early surfeit of all such worldly and dangerous vanities. Her word is law; her commands are implicitly obeyed. I wonder she isn't the most wilful little cricket alive."

Bessy rose, and gravely made a most profound courtesy.

"Still," she said, "I hope I have a few high moral qualities."

"Here comes Aunt Genevieve," said Nanny, rising. "Give her that easy-chair, Bessy. Why, you are lame!" she added, going round to her side.

"Yes; I believe I turned my ankle coming downstairs: the pain won't last long;" and, sinking into the easy-chair, she maintained her usual gentle complacency for a moment. then, leaning her head on her hands, all in one little second she wept softly but bitterly. We girls, at that, hardly knew what to do or say. We just stood round, and looked on in silent



awe. Never before had we seen a tear in the dove-like eyes of Aunt Genevieve.

"You are hurt, dear aunty, more than you say," at last I ventured, putting my arm about her neck.

"No, my darling; I'm weak and foolish, that's all. Don't mind me;" and she strove hard to force back the tears. "I think I must be growing nervous and silly; and yet I scarcely know what to do. I'm at my wits' end."

"Then it's grandy!" said Bessy, with emphasis.

"Hush, my dear—"

"'Lie still and slumber,' " added Bessy, with her pretty head thrown back; "no, I won't. I say grandy ought to be ashamed of herself. Her tyranny is dreadful."

"It is very hard to please her," almost sobbed Aunt Genevieve; and she looked so helpless, and at the same time so sweet and saintlike, that Bessy's face grew stormy. "She won't be soothed, some way. Drops and tonics do no good; nothing I can propose is of the least avail. She has seemed better all day; at least I hoped so, for she walked about a good deal," said Aunt Genevieve, with an air of utter exhaustion. "I shouldn't wonder if she came downstairs. She appears to think you want to be looked after. Actually she drove me out of the room. I never saw her in such a mood; it certainly is getting almost unbearable."

"It's her conscience," said Bessy, solemnly.

Aunt Genevieve closed her eyes, and sank back in her chair, the very picture of bewilderment.



“Aunt Jenny, if she sends for you, don’t you go,” said Bessy.

“My dear, you don’t know,” was the answer, with a faint, reproving smile. “I am as wax in her hands. Thirteen years is a long apprenticeship.”

“I hope I am not the cause of this trouble, Aunt Genevieve;” and I lifted her hands to my lips. “If I thought I was placing one straw more of burden upon your patient heart, I’d go home to-morrow.”

“No, child, that you shall not do,” said Aunt Genevieve, resolutely, lifting herself to an erect position. A red spot flamed in either cheek. “I am entitled to some little consideration; I have assumed a responsibility, and I will hold it. Unless you are very unhappy here, you must stay and make me happy.”

Bessy kissed her between the eyes; then, setting her lips firmly together, she marched out of the room.

“I’m sure there’s not much pleasure for you, my poor darling,” continued Aunt Genevieve, engrossed with her own grievances. “Even when I come down to see you for a little while, I make doleful company.”

“We’re glad to have you on any terms,” said Nanny, leaning over her.

“Indeed we are!” I echoed.

“I don’t know what I should do, girls, if you were not here,” said Aunt Genevieve, breaking down again, and hiding her face in the folds of Nancy’s dress.

“We’ll take you home with us,” said Nancy, gently.

“You shall go to Hollyhoxby,” I supplemented. “I think I wouldn’t mind staying there if you were with me—you and Cousin Philip.”



“Thank you, dear,”—and her eyes shone through the tears,—“you comfort me so much! I should have kept my trouble to myself; but it was daily growing so heavy! I have borne and borne, till now it seems as if all my patience is exhausted, and I cannot bear any more.”

I went softly to the piano, and played all the tender little airs I knew. Aunt Jenny listened and smiled, and was comforted. Presently she asked,—

“Where is Bessy?”

“She left the room a moment ago,” said Nanny.

“My dear, you don’t think she has gone up to *her*!”  
**exclaimed** Aunt Jenny, with pale lips.



## CHAPTER XXXV.

### GRANDY'S REPROOF.

**T**HAT was just where Bessy had gone. Aunt Genevieve's pallor, her tears, her terror, had awakened in the young Westerner the ancient ancestral courage, which, according to tradition, centuries before had faced battle-axes, and death, without flinching.

Surely, one might, with almost equal hardihood, face Grandy Normandy in one of her moods.

Up the stairs she ran, paused a moment to recover her breath before she entered; then she gave a loud double knock.

"Come in," said a sharp voice.

"Go out!" it supplemented, quite as sharply, when Bessy's luminous eyes, quite black with the intensity of her emotion, appeared within the door. But the girl stood her ground, while grandy half rose from her great armchair.

"I am not going out; I am coming in. I have something of great consequence to say to you," said Bessy, flinching not a whit from the steady fire of those piercing eyes, though the perspiration stood cold upon her temples.

"I don't wish to hear any thing; I desire to be left alone," said the invalid, imperiously, striking the floor with her pointed stick.



“Grandmother, you are never alone; you know you never are,” answered the girl, steadily, advancing a few steps nearer. “Your memories are with you! your dead are with you, it may be. Above, and more awful than all, God is with you!” and she lifted her hand, with an impressive gesture, upward.

Grandy sat for a moment like one paralyzed, her keen, hollow, black eyes riveted on the face of her daring descendant. The long white fingers worked convulsively over the carved head of the cane in her hand. She was little accustomed to hear opinions so plainly, so almost threateningly expressed; and the young girl standing so fearless, lighting up the dusky, shadowy room with the magnetism of youth and beauty, and the power of her direct and simple utterance, did make the despotic old woman quail for once.

“Where is my daughter Genevieve? did she send you here to insult me? How dare you come, a green child, and threaten me to my face! Where were you brought up, and how, thus to lose all respect for age and infirmity? I would put you out if I could. I *will* put you out if you don’t go; I have not lost all my strength, if I am nearing my grave.”

“Grandy, I have only this to say,” said intrepid Bessy: “You broke the heart of Aunt Hatty’s child—your own grandchild, a desolate, helpless orphan—when she came straight from the death-bed of mother and father to you. Think how she came alone, braving the dangers of the ocean, a girl of seventeen, to be refused, by her own flesh and blood, shelter, recog-



niton, and love ! And there is our sweet Cousin Ada down-stairs : you have nothing to say to her ; you have not even welcomed, not even spoken to her since she has been under your roof, for no fault of her own ;—and you boast of your hospitality ! Grandy, you are very cruel, a very cruel woman. I want to love you ; I long to venerate you ; I should like to have your blessing, and remember you by-and-bye as a saint ; but how can I, when you have been so hard, unkind, unforgiving,—yes, cruel !”

“Cruel !”

The passion, the emphasis of this word cannot be reproduced on paper.

Grandy drew a heavy breath. Her lips, her brow, worked, while the veins stood out on her aged temples like cords.

“Cruel !” she repeated ; “hear this child of nineteen arraign *me*, the woman of three score and ten ! She knows so much of life ! she has had so many experiences ! she, who has never smiled over the new born nor wept over the dead ! she, who never worshiped, with all the intensity of a deep and passionate nature, the idols before they turned to clay ! Oh, she, with her butterfly experience and existence, *dares* to judge me, who have followed seven of my dead from these doors, each time laying in the cold ground a piece of my tortured heart. And then, when ingratitude, desertion, fondness betrayed and repaid by the basest returns, have silvered this head and imbittered this wretched life, this wise child, who knows so much, comes to add to the old woman’s torture, and says I



am cruel ! Father, forgive her ! my God, forgive her !” and, bowing her aged head, Grandy Normandy burst into bitter sobs and moans, rocking to and fro with very anguish.

For one brief moment, the young girl stood dismayed, struck to the heart. Grandy’s burning words had fallen on her soul like drops of red-hot lava. She felt, that, in a sense, all she had said was deadly true.

“ O grandmother, forgive me ! don’t cry like that ! oh, I am so sorry !” and she fell on her knees by the side of the chair. “ I was presumptuous ; I ask you, kneeling, to forgive me. I see now that it is I am cruel ; I am but a child, and know nothing of sorrow or trouble. Won’t you forgive me, grandmother ? I came of my own accord. Aunt Jenny didn’t send me ; she is too good and loving ; nothing would tempt her to do so. Let me love you ; let us all love you, and one another. I didn’t mean to hurt you so. I was very unwise ; I am very sorry.”

Grandy lifted her gray head. It was almost awful to see the seams and hollows of that thin old face all drenched in tears.

“ You shocked me, child ; you shocked me !” she said, in slow accents. “ And yet what does it matter by whom God sends truth ? Go away now, and let me think. Go send Jenny up to me. I was unkind to the poor girl this morning, unkind to the only one who remains leal and loving. May the God of the widow and the desolate reward her !”

“ Then you forgive me, grandy ?” said Bessy, timidly.



“Yes, yes, I forgive you. You have the spirit of the Normandies; you will make a good woman I hope. Only wait till you are sent, my child; though perhaps you were—perhaps you were—how can I tell? There, I am weary and weak. Go ask Jenny to come up to me.”

Quietly the young girl arose, shorn of her overweening confidence, humbled in her pride and self assertion. She moved away then, with a little gesture of humility, came back, and her voice trembled as she faltered,—

“You’ll let me kiss you, grandmother? I’d like to kiss you now.”

“Come here, child;” and grandy held out her arms, and presently the girl was held with a nervous, yearning grasp to the heart that had lost so much.

“And, grandmother, may I ask one more favor?”

“Well, child, I suppose I must hear you to the end.”

“May Cousin Ada come up with Aunt Genevieve? She is much more lovable than I am, grandy, dear;” and the eloquent eyes spoke more strongly than words.

“Yes, child; tell her her old grandmother wants to see her.”

“O grandy, now you are glorious!” cried impulsive Bessy, and rushed from the room.

All the foregoing she told us between laughter and tears.

“Cousin Ada Stewart,” she added, “she will just worship you. I expect she has been longing to break in upon her pride, and is very glad I broke it for her.”



Aunt Genevieve listened, quite incredulous. I was filled with alarms. I had never had a strong desire to see grandy ; but now it seemed as if some sweet voice whispered in my ear, " Be ye reconciled."

Ah, the sweet Bible words ! how everywhere and in every state they adapt themselves to human needs, longings, and duties ! I took Aunt Jenny's hand ; and, like two children, we entered the dreaded presence.

Grandy was prepared. There was no half-way forgiveness or confession with a Normandy.

" My child, I have been unjust," she said ; " come here."

She held me for a little while in silence. When she spoke, her voice was broken.

" I asked your mother to come to me ; but *he* said no. I recognized the right of a husband, and acquiesced in the obedience of a wife ; but it was very hard, my dear. You are her second self ; let me look at you."

She held me at arms' length.

" They tell me you are very kind and gentle and forgiving," she said. " You are like my Genevieve, who gave up her own happiness to bear with the petulance and foolish whims of a poor, selfish old woman."

" Mother !" said Aunt Genevieve, a shade of reproof in her voice.

" Let me talk, Jenny ; I seem to have had new light let into my mind since that child came up here this morning. My dear, they tell me you are a Christian."



“I hope I am,” I said.

“You shall teach me, you two, how to believe, in my old age. As for Jenny, the Lord will surely bless her, because she has obeyed the holy command, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother.’ Where is Philip Marston?”

Aunt Jenny turned away; and I stammered a little as I answered her.

“So he has never married? Well, he has proved his fidelity at all events. Write him to come to Ruby Hall.”

“O mother!” murmured Aunt Jenny.

“Hush, Jenny, I am going to have my way now as before. I have lived in silence and gloom and suffering long enough. It is not too late for the sun to shine a little while on my old age, and then there is the twilight. Write him to come to Christmas, Ada Stewart; and remember to say that *I* ask him, and shall take it as a very great favor. Be circumstantial; don’t miss a word.”

“I promise you I will not, dear grandmother,” I said; and I began to feel my heart warming towards her. My own dear mother’s mother! I had cherished resentment towards her almost unknown to myself; and, in a Christian’s heart, there should be no room for resentment. Even towards Martha Voles I had grown charitable: it was the fruit of holier living, of a purer heart. Every day Christ grew more and more a reality. The time had long gone by when he seemed like a myth. Every thing in nature now was vocal with his praise. I began to understand



how it was that Christ could dwell within me, and how He could be seen wherever the eye that loved Him turned. I saw how that, before this blissful change, I had made my own gods, and worshiped them,—how that idolatry is the darkness of the human heart, but true worship the beacon-light of the most obscure spirit. I was like one working in a diamond mine—every jewel I found was more precious than the last, because it added value to all the rest. It was shown to me, in some mysterious way, that God is full of sympathy for His creatures; and consequently my heart was always going up to Him. These things I did not fathom then exactly as I do now, because my religious life is broader; and yet, in one way and another, I experienced all I have said. There is a deal of romance in the poetic and artistic Christianity of to-day, a deal of idealistic and unreal devotion to the hero of a world's educated fancy, a mythic spiritualism. It is because we want to make our own Christ: we are not willing to take Him as He came, the Son of God.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### COUSIN PHILIP AT RUBY HALL.

ONCE more the old Hall would be ablaze with light and full of happy, echoing voices.

Bessy declared it was like the change from a graveyard to a ballroom ; for she had felt ever since her visit, till now, as if there was a corpse in the house.

Sweet and savory smells reached us from the long, roomy kitchen. We girls went round with Mrs. Clute, inspecting the great wardrobes built into the wall in the hall up-stairs, and learned what store grandy set by her linen-chests. We unfolded great fluffy blankets, odorous with lavender, that no moth had dared to touch with his destructive maw ; immense quilts of cotton, of wool, even of satin,—one in particular, made of the softest pearl-gray silk embroidered with white floss, that a friend had brought her from across the ocean. We admired the wonderful table-cover on which the birds seemed ready to fly the moment you opened it. So we went singing, brightening up unused rooms, and making the hearths ready for the fires that would soon blaze upon them. Mrs. Clute allowed us to inspect her pantries ; and, if ever poetry entered simple glass jars and nestled down in the midst of preserved sweets, it certainly was there. Such crimsons and yellows and luscious, lucid browns, all so daintily arranged ! The pears



looked as if they might have been picked but yesterday.

“I’ll back my preserve closets against any in the county,” said Mrs. Clute. “Your grandmother taught me how ; for, when I fust come here I was younger than Sally ; and she was a good mistress, I’ll allow, barring a touch of temper now and then. But then, great beauties always is spoiled, you see ; and her husband he treated her just like a baby. I never did see two such lovin’ people. I think it nigh broke her heart to lay him in the ground. She ain’t been the same woman since, and that’s thirteen years ago.”

Then Mrs. Clute allowed us to look on while she roasted and baked. There was a stove in the kitchen, but she never used it on special occasions. It was a new experience to see meat roasted on the spit ; but it was great fun to turn the turkey before the blazing fire of hard wood, and hear the gravy hiss and splutter.

The long, wide dresser shelves were a sight to see.

“When in the world are we going to consume so many chickens ?” cried Bessy, aghast. “We shall all turn into restaurants, with show-windows full of game.”

“No danger, Miss Bessy,” said Mrs. Clute ; “them’s for the poor. Mistress gives a Christmas dinner apiece to twelve poor families.”

“Bless her !” said Bessy, reverently ; and then we turned our attention to cracking walnuts.

“Your grandfather was very fond o’ these in the



season of them. He used to spread them in the south room," said Mrs. Clute, "when the children was little; and he'd make a great square almost all over the floor, so that, if just one was taken, it couldn't help being missed at first sight. It was great fun when he did miss 'em, I can tell you."

Cousin Philip had written me that he would come. Wouldn't he! Why, his letter was sunshine itself. It seemed as if the diamond on the point of his pen must have run fluid light. He was happy from the first word to the last; and a greater joy must have underlaid the beautiful thoughts. He would surely come on Christmas Day.

I got my arm round Aunt Genevieve, and whispered the news in her ear as a great secret. How beautifully she blushed, and how glorious grew her eyes! She was a happy woman: she had been faithful to her duty, her conscience, and her heart. More than once the gentle words of my mother came back to me with a new meaning:—

"Perhaps to her only may be pronounced the 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'"

The reward of a mother's gratitude, though it came very late, was sufficient for all the past of trial and endurance for Christ's sake.

There never was a brighter day than that in which the coach rolled up to the door, and the five brothers, Olly at their head, marched into the house. Cousin Philip came with them; and I was rather glad that Aunt Genevieve had gone out, accompanied by Sally with well-loaded baskets hanging from each fat arm,



to see grandy's poor, to whom, as I have said before, a liberal supply of Christmas dainties was always given the day before.

We were all together in the bright parlor, now connected with another room by the opening of folding-doors.

"And how is our stately, handsome old grandy?" queried Walter, the youngest of the brothers, a pretty, curly-headed youth. Cousin Philip had gone to his room, and Aunt Jenny had not come back yet.

"She is better, ever so much better," said Bessy, as she bent over a geranium which had just blossomed; and she smiled, what at she and the bright flowers knew between them.

"How different they all are!" I said to Bessy, when I could get her by myself; "who is the one who made straight for the books? He is reading now, or rather turning over the leaves of some old worm-eaten volume."

"Oh, he reads Greek," said Bessy, laughing. "He is the bookworm as well as the Adonis of the family. Don't you think him handsome?"

"Yes, he is," I frankly admitted.

"We call him 'Friar Tuck,'" said Bessy, "he is so quiet and so fond of the woods. We all have character names at home."

"What is yours?" I asked.

"'Queen Mab' and 'Tibby' and sometimes 'Marplot.'"

"And that dark-haired one looking at the pictures?"



“ ‘Robin Hood.’ The youngest one, that rather pretty boy, has a name not in the least romantic— ‘Jack-at-a-pinch.’ ”

“ I suppose because he is always ready.”

“ That’s he exactly. Wally is the very essence of good nature.”

At that moment, the young fellow came forward, and pretty soon Nanny joined him. While I was, I fear, staring at them and thinking how handsome they looked side by side, Bessy gave me a sign, and flew out of the room. I followed her.

“ There is Aunt Genevieve coming through the short cut,” she said, dancing to the door.

“ O you darling,” she cried, with a fervent kiss, as Aunt Jenny came in, “ why didn’t you take us with you on your mission of mercy ?”

“ I thought you would rather meet your brothers, my dear. They are here, I suppose.”

“ Yes, they have all come.”

“ Well,—what are you watching me so for ?” and the faintest shade of color rippled along her cheeks.

“ Why, you look so lovely, Aunt Jenny. The walk has given you a sweet color—and—you ought to keep your hat on—it’s charming ; isn’t it, Cousin Ada ?”

Of course I said yes, and without hypocrisy, while Bessy busied herself with fussy little touches about her neck, her hair, her own eyes full of mischief.

“ Aunt Jenny, somebody came beside the boys—our boys I mean,” said Bessy. “ You don’t mean to say you are going to faint ?” she cried, aghast.

“ I faint ! oh, no, I never fainted in my life,” said



Aunt Jenny, with a forced little laugh. "I'll go upstairs now to mother. Of course I understand—"

"Here she is! here's Aunt Jenny!" cried a boyish voice. "Hurrah, a kiss apiece for Christmas!"

The door opened behind him; and Aunt Jenny had seen Cousin Philip, and he had seen her.

For one second, she was awfully shaken. The color fled from her face, leaving it like marble. Bessy just looked; and I did think, for a moment, it was she who was going to faint.

There was no scene, however. Instantly the woman's dignity came to her aid; and, as if she had parted from him but yesterday instead of thirteen years ago (what an age that seemed to me then!), bidding him as she thought an eternal farewell, she said, in a voice that was just a thought unsteady,—

"Philip, I am happy to see you," and held out her hand.

Then Bessy, who, I suppose, could not help being dramatic, showed me her palms where she had clenched them with her nails.

Well, that was just as it should be. They were old friends, those two; and they met as old friends. Aunt Genevieve was very quietly happy; I knew that, if there *were* tears in her eyes when she turned to go upstairs. I knew it by the flush in her cheek and the spring of her step.

We had a merry revel that night; and we hung our stockings all in a row, and, in the morning after breakfast, we went on a tour of inspection. The budget of miscellanies they contained was a sight to see. There



was a happy family of cotton-flannel rabbits, mice, beetles, cats, and spiders. A set of corncob furniture fell to Bessy's lot; and a brace of black pickaninnies, whose beaded eyes were fearful to behold, was consigned to Nancy. I was treated to a brooch and ear-rings composed of anthracite; and Bessy wore bracelets cunningly devised from all sorts of vegetables for the rest of the day. It was, however, reserved for evening to rifle the Christmas-tree of its costly gifts.

Grandy could not be there; but she sent heartfelt thanks down to the nephews and nieces for a magnificent camel's-hair shawl and a splendid bearskin, while shouts went up as Aunt Jenny opened a plain but rich casket wherein shone a complete suit of diamonds set in the most beautiful and chaste design. Dear little Aunt Jenny's fingers trembled, and she dared not look up.

"Diamonds!" sighed Nancy; "and I've wanted just *one* solitaire all my life."

"Which comes just in season, then," exclaimed Bessy, opening a delightful little box wherein sparkled a superb diamond.

"Hold your finger out," said Bessy.

Nanny moved her hand mechanically, so dazed that she could not speak.

"There, now be thankful," laughed Bessy; "you've got what you've wanted all your life."

"I certainly am not dreaming," murmured the girl, turning the circlet this way and that, "but I can't believe it yet."



“We’ll give you all the evening to convince yourself,” said Bessy.

There fell to my lot a pair of gold bands and a letter. The bands of course were from Cousin Philip. I need not say how fast my heart beat when I saw upon the envelope of the letter a foreign postmark, and recognized my father’s handwriting. I had scarcely expected a letter from him.

“We’ll give you one good hour to read your letter if you’ll promise to sing for us three of your choicest songs,” said Bessy, mischievously.

It is needless to say that I did promise, and was soon in my room alone with an unaccustomed pleasure.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### MY FATHER'S LETTER.

“MY darling child.”

That was the commencement. The letter was dated Paris.

I kissed every word, it was so new and sweet to be thus remembered.

“I am sitting in the ante-room of our old house, and I need not say what recollections arise in my mind as I think of the past. A very pleasant French family occupy our former apartments. Your friend Rupert is still here with his mother; his father is dead. Monsieur Bouve and his sister look exactly as they did on the morning of our departure—the flowers, the yard, the surroundings, the neighbors, are all the same, while the old clock gives now the hour of ten. Monsieur Bouve hopes that you have not neglected your French, and his sister that you still remember how to make the *coufflé* she taught you. I give their messages as they send them.

“And now, my dear child, some words about myself. I am naturally a reticent man; and, after the grave-sod was placed over the face of the *one only woman I ever loved*, a sudden disgust of existence seized me. From night till morning and from morning till night, my life was passed in utter weariness, save only in those hours when business cares required



my attention. I fell into a passive state of mental hardness, that is the only way I can describe it. The feeling that my wife had gone, that I had buried her, that every vestige of our happy life had vanished,—fed my morbid fancies with the food of unbelief. I came to the conclusion that man was a puppet set to work by the chances of a fatality that was final, automatic, and fatal to any desire of a hereafter. I said to myself, that I would love no one, not even my own child, who so needed my love and care; and, as I held down my natural affection, coldness and indifference came in time to take its place.

“All this I confess, my dear child, to you because I now see how I have wronged both you and myself. Of other matters, I will not speak yet-a-while: that part of my experience I leave to your Cousin Philip. I merely repeat, as I have to him, that pity was the only recognized feeling I had for Miss Martha Voles, whose position in my family was pictured to me as the result of a series of misfortunes, a change from the competence of a lady to the service of a domestic.

“However, that is all over. By a letter which I received this morning from Philip, I am at once freed from the self-immolation to which I had, without sufficient exercise of judgment, pledged myself.

“Nobody knows what I have suffered since the day that you were suddenly seized with illness, but God. Your avowal, though doubtless the result of coming delirium, that your mother stood at my side, opened at once all the closed avenues of my heart. In that



supreme moment, it seemed to me eternity was revealed and your mother still lived. The shock was what I needed. I thrilled like a limb just coming out of a palsied sleep, and then ensued a fierce contest with myself. During all my voyage, this contest never ceased. Heaven sent one of its angels to my help—a poor, humble woman, going out to see her son, who had suddenly come into some good fortune. This poor yet great disciple helped me in my struggle to override my doubts ; and I am coming home to be a new man and a better father to my child.”

I could read no more. I had to put the letter down, and just go and sob a prayer of thankfulness to God, who had given me back my father.

It must have been an hour before I could compose myself sufficiently to return to the parlor, where, to my astonishment, I found Bessy on the sofa, surrounded by everybody in the room, and learned that Aunt Genevieve had made her first appearance in the character of a heroine.

It seemed that Bessy, in the midst of a homily upon ancestors, whose portraits she was exhibiting with one of her humorous little lectures, accidentally let the candle fall, which caught the lace of her sleeves on fire, and her dress, being thin, was suddenly in a flame. No one but Aunt Jenny had the forethought to smother it with the table-cloth.

“I say, Cousin Ada Stewart,” said Bessy, with a queer little quiver in her voice, “I’m like the busy bee ; I’ve been improving the ‘shining hour.’ What with being thrown from Dixie,—the old sorrel,—fall-



ing down-stairs, and getting burned to death, I wonder if I ever *shall* get home alive! I've only got to be drowned; and, if I survive that, I think there's a tolerable chance of my being an old woman before I die. As for Aunt Genevieve Normandy, just put a few brass hoops round her, some bouquets, and a rope, and she's a whole *posse* of fire-engines. The way she smothered me for a minute! I haven't quite recovered my breath yet, though I think I could talk if I hadn't any breath."

It was a merry evening after that, though poor Bessy sat with her hands bound up and Blossom's head on her knee. Blossom had shared in all our frolics as well as our feasts. With everybody he was a prime favorite, and he evidently felt that he was among friends, and was on his best behavior.

On the following day, Cousin Phil took me to ride in the small cutter. Everybody quizzed me and Aunt Genevieve, who bore it with the sweetest submission. The ride was arranged in order that I might hear the good news.

"I might have written you a week ago," said Cousin Philip, as we got well along the road; "but I preferred to wait, and waiting brought you that letter, with one for me. I have no doubt it was all right."

"Oh, such a letter, Cousin Philip!" I said.

"Good! I thought as much. Well, let me see, where am I to begin? In the first place, we had to watch Mr. Clewes, who, since your father left, has had ample opportunities to enrich himself, if he so chose. We found that his haunts were disreputable,



and his associates outlaws. It seems that he is in some way connected with a gang of counterfeiters ; and he probably had in view the use of the premises, which would insure secrecy and divert suspicion on account of the seclusion of Hollyhoxby. In the second place, that poor man of whom I wrote you is dead. Doctor Henry, being aided and abetted by the matron of the institution, obtained admission, in spite of the protestations of the nurse, and received his dying deposition. That man had been the husband of Mrs. Davis,—that man was the father of Martha Voles and Mr. Clewes, your father's new agent,—that man had passed fifteen years in the penitentiary at Albany, on the double charge of manslaughter and counterfeiting.

“And are Mr. Clewes and Martha brother and sister?” I asked, sick to the heart.

“Yes ; and it seems the whole family is worthless and criminal. They were all concerned in the business of counterfeiting, even Martha, who was, at the time of her father's commitment, fifteen years old ; and, perhaps, in that way she procured those dresses that are at once so showy and costly.”

“But does Mrs. Davis know ?” I asked.

“Mrs. Davis knows, and Mrs. Davis is completely checkmated. I had an interview with both Martha and herself ; and, after a few weak denials and attempts to browbeat both Doctor Henry and myself, she threw off all disguise. I took the liberty of clearing the premises, and putting on guard a sufficient force to keep the house in order until you shall be able to return.”



“O Cousin Philip, I’ll go right away,” I said; “I shall be glad to go.”

“Not so fast, little lady,” said Cousin Philip; “there is no need of any hurry. Your father will be home in the course of next month, and I would advise you to remain here until his return.”

“Does Doctor Henry think that is best?” I asked.

“I really don’t know just what Doctor Henry thinks,” was his reply, a furtive smile accompanying the words. The smile made me wish I had held my tongue.

“Because you know, Cousin Philip, that I am a stranger here, and doing only transient work. There I could find real, legitimate work to do, and feel at home in doing it. Oh, home will seem so sweet to me now!—and father, he will, he must be changed!”

“Undoubtedly. I shall look to see the family pew once more a living fact and not a dead reminder. Suppose you invite your cousins there.”

I clasped my hands at this brilliant idea, which only needed to be broached to complete my happiness.

“And Aunt Genevieve?”

“Most assuredly, if she could leave her mother,” said he, a faint glow on his cheek.

“Grandy is really getting to be angelic,” I said: “there is no knowing how much self-sacrifice she is capable of. I’ll ask her myself.”

That week will ever be memorable to me. It was a season of unrestrained, innocent fun, of unexampled merriment. We had sleighrides, tableaux, concerts, parties; and one night we went up into grandy’s



room. The yet handsome old lady received us in splendid style, dressed in stately brocade and lace hundreds of years old.

“I don’t know as dear old grandy would mind being short of money,” said Bessy, in an aside to me; “but I think being short of ancestors would about kill her.”

The next day, I stole up-stairs while the girls and all the rest were busy, chosing a moment when Aunt Genevieve had gone into the housekeeper’s room. Grandy’s door was slightly ajar, and the room looked brighter than usual. She herself lay high among the pillows, and her face seemed bathed in the soft light that entered the west window. She looked so gentle and subdued that the sight overcame me for a moment; and I burst into tears, and threw my arms about her, moved by I know not what invisible power.

“My deary, my deary!” exclaimed the invalid, “is it for grandy’s sorrow you cry, or grandy’s sin?”

“Neither, grandmother: it’s just come over me that I loved you more than I ever thought I should, and I want you to forgive me.”

“Forgive you? for what, my child?”

“That I have not cherished right feelings,—that I have felt you were unjust to my mother—”

“And so I was, child, so I was,” said grandy; “but it was all unlawful, unchristian pride; and, alas, the old prejudice dies so hard! Ah, child! there’s no torture to a mother’s heart so keen as the disobedience of a cherished son or daughter. But I have



been thinking, and I see that I expected too much of my children. Your mother loved an honest man, whom I hated because he had only a competence and his ancestors were working-people. I overlooked his nobility of character no doubt. Your mother saw, and loved it. Well, let by-gones be by-gones. I am nearer the unseen world now; I have parted with prejudices; I have, I humbly hope, made my peace with my Maker."

"Grandy, I wish Aunt Genevieve could go home with me for a little holiday," I said at last, almost frightened at my own presumption. "Mrs. Clute tells me there will be plenty of company in a few weeks, and you would not be so lonely."

"Mrs. Clute"—and grandy begun with her old sternness, but ended the sentence with a smile—"is a woman of remarkable knowledge and great resources."

"Yes, Genevieve must go. I shall miss her, and she will miss me; but I will not bar the way to her enjoyment of a rare social pleasure, for rare enough it will be for her, poor child! But"—and she held up her thin but shapely forefinger—"she must be married under this roof. That's a special edict; there I must have my way."

Dear grandy, how could I ever have thought her cold and cruel!

The girls accepted my invitation with marked delight, and there was plenty of stir and bustle even after Bessy's brothers were gone.

Mrs. Clute took Aunt Jenny's place oftener of late, and dressmakers were at work in the back parlor.



Cousin Philip came after us. I was prepared to see some few changes, perhaps, in my father most of all. I knew that pretty little Polly had gone home, and that Cousin Philip was building in the vicinity of Hollyhoxy, on some land that my father had sold him.

Ah! there was that dark, bright face, the face my father used to wear in my dear mother's lifetime. No need to tell me I had found my old place: my father loved me! He held me in his arms as he had done when I was a little child. In the midst of the merry talk and pleasant confusion, I turned at the sound of a familiar voice, with a quick-beating heart, and found both my hands imprisoned by Doctor Henry.

And so now—as he has done for many, many past, happy years—he holds both hands and heart; and, with him for my guide and helper, I try to do my MASTER'S work for time and for ETERNITY, and to lead, with all earnestness, the “Life Beautiful.”

THE END.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

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WHAT THE SEVEN DID. By Margaret Sidney. Boston : D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$1.75. One of the most attractive volumes of the present year, or, indeed, of any of the years preceding, is this delightful record of the sayings and doings of the Wordsworth Club at its various regular and irregular meetings. The club is a girls' club and the mystic number seven constitutes its active strength. The members are greatly given to fun and frolic, and their meetings, although generally spiced with easy-to-break-out tempers of some of the lively crowd, are generally occasions of special enjoyment. There is a mystery in the story—a succession of mysteries, rather—and they all have to do with a certain Miss Rachel Wigthorpe and a Little Brown Box. Just what they are we are not permitted to tell, but they have the effect of bringing the members of the Club together at very special weekly meetings in Miss Wigthorpe's parlor for seven consecutive weeks, and not only that, but all the boys and girls of the neighborhood who have, or who can beg or borrow ten cents, are eager to share in the enjoyment of these mysterious evenings. Even the babies and the cats sometimes have to be let in, and occasionally a prominent part is taken in the proceedings by a mature and irrepressible young gentleman of three, who insists on wearing his hat and has a proclivity, in certain contingencies, for the active use of teeth and nails. It is a delightful book from beginning to end, and will furnish no end of entertainment for juvenile readers. It is profusely illustrated, with an artistic cover designed by J. Wells Champney.

TENNYSON'S PASTORAL SONGS. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$2.50. Among the holiday publications now in course of preparation by the Messrs. Lothrop, this exquisite volume merits particular attention. It is made up of choice selections from the works of the poet-laureate, beautifully illustrated, printed on the finest paper, and elegantly bound. Among the selections are some of the songs from "Maud" and "The Princess," "The Bugle Song," "The Brook," "The Miller's Daughter," etc. Nothing more choice of its kind will be offered holiday buyers the coming season.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

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Egypt\* occupied the geographical centre of the ancient world. It was fertile and attractive. Its inhabitants were polished, cultivated, and warlike. Its great cities were centres of wealth and civilization, and from the most distant countries came scholars and travellers to learn wisdom under Egyptian masters and study the arts, sciences and governmental policy of the country. While surrounding nations were sunk in primitive barbarism Egypt shone as the patron of arts and acquirements. With a natural thirst for conquest she introduced a system of military tactics which made her armies almost invincible. Her wisdom was a proverb among the surrounding nations. "If a philosopher," says Wilkinson, "sought knowledge, Egypt was the school; if a prince required a physician it was to Egypt that he applied: if any material point perplexed the decision of Kings or councils, to Egypt it was referred, and the arms of a Pharaoh were the hope and frequently the protection, even at a late period, of a less powerful ally. It would surprise many readers to know how much in customs, social and religious, has come down to us from this ancient people. Placing the ring on the bride's finger at marriage is an instance. The Egyptian gold pieces were in the form of rings, and the husband placed one on the finger of his wife as an emblem of the fact that he entrusted her henceforth with all his property. The celebration of Twelfth Day and Candlemas are Egyptian festivals under different names. The Catholic priest shaves his head because the Egyptian priests did the same ages before; the English clergyman reads the liturgy in a linen dress because linen was the dress of the Egyptians, and more than two thousand years before the bishop of the Church of Rome pretended to hold the keys of heaven and hell there was a priest in Egypt whose title was the Appointed Keeper of the Two Doors of Heaven.

It is not strange that the story of this people and country should be so fascinating. There is an element of the mysterious in it which attracts even the reader who does not care for historical reading in general. In the preparation of her work Mrs. Clement has not only had the advantage of extensive reading upon the subject, but of personal travel and knowledge. She has skilfully condensed the vast amount of material at her command, and presents to the reading public a volume which needs only to be examined to become a standard.

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\* Egypt. By Mrs. Clara Erskine Clement. Lothrop's Library of Entertaining History. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$1.50.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

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FIVE LITTLE PEPPERS AND HOW THEY GREW. By Margaret Sidney. Ill. Boston : D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$1.50. Of all the books for juvenile readers which crowd the counters of the dealers this season, not one possesses so many of those peculiar qualities which go to make up a perfect story as this charming work. It tells the story of a happy family, the members of which, from the mother to the youngest child, are bound together in a common bond of love. Although poor, and obliged to plan and scrimp and pinch to live from day to day, they make the little brown house which holds them a genuine paradise. To be sure the younger ones grumble occasionally at having nothing but potatoes and bread six days in the week, but that can hardly be regarded as a defect either of character or disposition. Some of the home-scenes in which these little Peppers are the actors are capitally described, and make the reader long to take part in them. The description of the baking of the birthday cake by the children during the absence of the mother ; the celebration of the first Christmas, and the experiences of the family with the measles are portions of the book which will be thoroughly enjoyed. A good deal of ingenuity is displayed by the author in bringing the little Peppers out of their poverty and giving them a start in life. The whole change is made to turn on the freak of the youngest of the cluster, the three-year old Phronsie, who insisted on sending a gingerbread boy to a rich old man who was spending the summer at the village hotel. The old gentleman after laughing himself sick at the ridiculous character of the present, called to see her, and is so taken with the whole family that he insists upon carrying the eldest girl home with him to be educated. How she went, and what she did, and how the rest of the family finally followed her, with the rather unlooked-for discovery of relationship at the close, make up the substance of a dozen or more interesting chapters. It ought, for the lesson it teaches, to be put into the hands of every boy and girl in the country. It is very fully and finely illustrated and bound in elegant form, and it will find prominent place among the higher class of juvenile presentation books the coming holiday season.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

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A FAMILY FLIGHT OVER EGYPT AND SYRIA. By E. E. Hale and Susan Hale. Ill. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$2.50. Of all the books issued during the holiday season a year ago, not one had so immediate and widespread a popularity as the first volume of this series, *A Family Flight through France, Germany, Norway and Switzerland*. Although a very large edition was issued by the publishers early in December it was wholly exhausted before Christmas, while the call was at its height, and there has been a steady demand for it ever since in the regular channels of the trade. Attractive as it was, the present volume is of still greater interest and is even more profusely illustrated. It is especially timely too, as everybody is anxious, in view of the present complications in the East, to know something more about Egypt than can be gained from the daily papers.

The family — four in number this time — make their flight from New York, landing at Bordeaux, and pushing on without stop to Marseilles, which they reached just in time to catch the steamer for Alexandria. They stop at Malta on the way, but only for a few hours, which, however, are well improved. At Alexandria they remain for two days, and then hurry on to Cairo, where friends are awaiting them. Here the Nile journey begins, and an entertaining record of each day's experiences is given. The party sees all that possibly can be seen, both going up and coming down the river. After their return to Cairo and a few days' rest they start for Suez, where they traverse the one hundred miles of the famous canal to Port Saïd, on the Mediterranean. From there they take the steamer to Jaffa, the ancient Joppa, and the most ancient town in the world. From there they push on to Jerusalem, and after an exhaustive exploration of the sacred city extend their travels to other historical localities of the Holy Land. The interest of the narrative never palls. The style is breezy, free and unconventional, and nothing is told but is worth the telling. The volume is beautifully bound, and, as we have already stated, is abundantly illustrated. A new edition of the first volume will be issued simultaneously with *Egypt and Syria* in ample time for the holiday trade.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

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**AFTER THE FRESHET.** By Edward A. Rand. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$1.25. This is the second volume in the V I F series which was stamped with success by the first issue. It is unnecessary to say of any books of Mr. Rand's that they are bright, interesting and helpful; that may be taken for granted. His stories have always been characterized by those qualities and in the one before us they are particularly prominent. There is always a purpose in his books, an influence which remains after the mere incidents of the story are forgotten. He has painted a variety of characters, good and bad, in *After the Freshet*, all of which have a special mission to perform. The main character of the story is Arthur Manley, a young man of fine talents and noble character, who has been brought up in a rough farmer's family in ignorance of his parentage. From the fact that he has become a great favorite with a wealthy family in town, he has incurred the dislike of an unprincipled lawyer, who has designs upon that family, and who resorts to a series of persecutions in order to get him out of the way. The story of how he evades the plots of his enemy and how he ultimately discovers the secret of his birth and achieves the other and higher ambitions of his life, is vividly and affectingly told.

**TODAYS AND YESTERDAYS.** By Carrie Adelaide Cooke. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$1.25. This pleasant story is from the pen of the author of *From June to June*, and is intended for the reading of girls who have reached that age when their real mission in life seems to commence; the age when school-days are ended, and the sphere of duty is enlarged by wider acquaintance and new responsibilities. The story opens at a New Hampshire seminary on the eve of examination day, and the principal characters are three girls, school-companions and fellow-graduates. It is not a story of incident, nor does its interest depend upon strong contrasts or vivid descriptions. The narrative is a quiet following out of the currents of these three lives, with their various changes, their joys and sorrows. A strong religious element permeates the book, and it will be found a valuable addition to Sunday-school literature.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

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**THE PETTIBONE NAME.** By Margaret Sidney. The V I F Series. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$1.25 If the publishers had offered a prize for the brightest, freshest and most brilliant bit of home fiction wherewith to start off this new series, they could not have more perfectly succeeded than they have in securing this, *The Pettibone Name*, a story that ought to create an immediate and wide sensation, and give the author a still higher place than she now occupies in popular esteem. The heroine of the story is not a young, romantic girl, but a noble, warm-hearted woman, who sacrifices wealth, ease and comfort for the sake of others who are dear to her. There has been no recent figure in American fiction more clearly or skillfully drawn than Judith Pettibone, and the impression made upon the reader will not be easily effaced. Most of the characters of the book are such as may be met with in any New England village. Deacon Badger, whose upright life and pleasant ways make him a universal favorite; little Doctor Pilcher, with his hot temper and quick tongue; Samantha Scarritt, the village dress-maker, whose sharp speech and love of gossip are tempered by a kind heart and quick sympathy, and the irrepressible Bobby Jane, all are from life, and all alike bear testimony to the author's keenness of observation and skill of delineation. Taken altogether, it is a delightful story of New England life and manners; sparkling in style, bright in incident, and intense in interest. It deserves to be widely read, as it will be.

**LIFE AND PUBLIC CAREER OF HORACE GREELEY.** By W. M. Cornell, LL. D. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$1.25. This is a new edition of a popular life of Greeley, the first edition of which was early exhausted. It has been the author's aim to give a clear and correct pen picture of the great editor, and to trace the gradual steps in his career from a poor and hard-working farmer boy to the editorial chair of the most powerful daily newspaper in America. The book has been thoroughly revised and considerable new matter added.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

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**POLLY'S SCHEME.** By Corydon. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$1.00. Here is a book that ought to create a sensation; bright, breezy and jolly; full of life from cover to cover, and worthy a place in any of the countless carpet-bags which will be packed by vacationists this summer. "Polly's Scheme" is one that has occurred to hundreds of weary city-dwellers when casting about to find ways and means to spend the summer months comfortably and profitably. It was for herself and husband to rent a nice little furnished house in the country for the summer, persuade their friends to live with them on the coöperative plan, save money, and be happy. Polly and her husband were young and inexperienced, and imagined that they had made an original discovery. They were successful in securing just such a place as they dreamed of, and took possession, with the promise of boarders as soon as the season should open. The book is a history of the occurrences and happenings of that summer, and a most entertaining history it is. From the sudden advent and equally sudden departure of Mrs. Vivian Sylvester—who insisted on having a fire lighted every morning to take the chill off the air for the sake of her poodle—down to the close of the season when the curtain falls on the story and its characters, it is full of surprises and humorous incidents. The character drawing is clearly and skillfully done, and the whole book hasn't a dull sentence in it. It is just long enough to be read in a single afternoon, and the laziest man in the world could not possibly go to sleep over it. Mark it down for a sure place in the vacation bundle of books, even if it has to be read before that time. It will bear a second perusal.

**SOME YOUNG HEROINES.** Illustrated. By Pansy. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co. Price \$1.00. Another book by Pansy, made up of charming stories expressly adapted to the reading of girls, and filled with beautiful pictures. It would be difficult to describe the manifold attractions that are held between the covers of this book, but they can be easily got at by little readers when once the volume is in their hands.



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